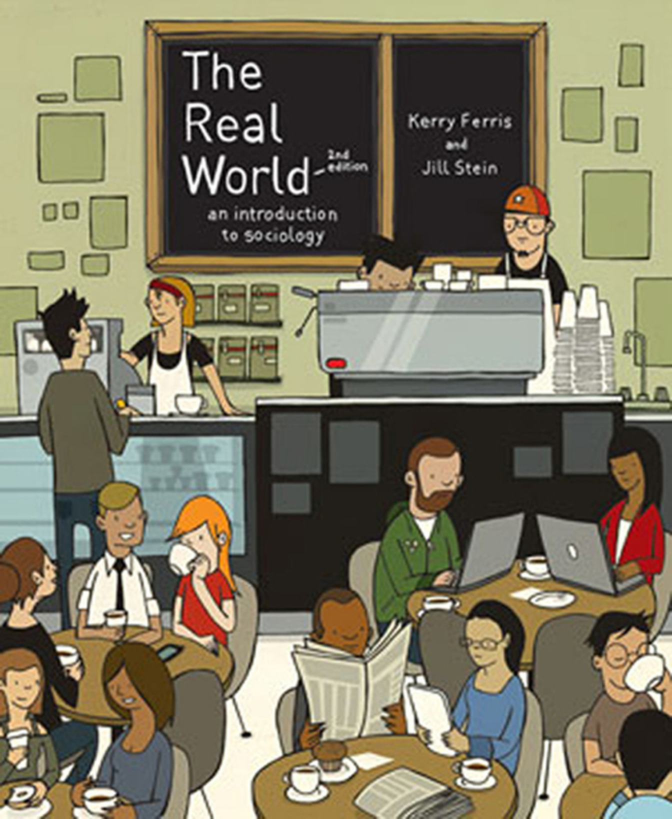
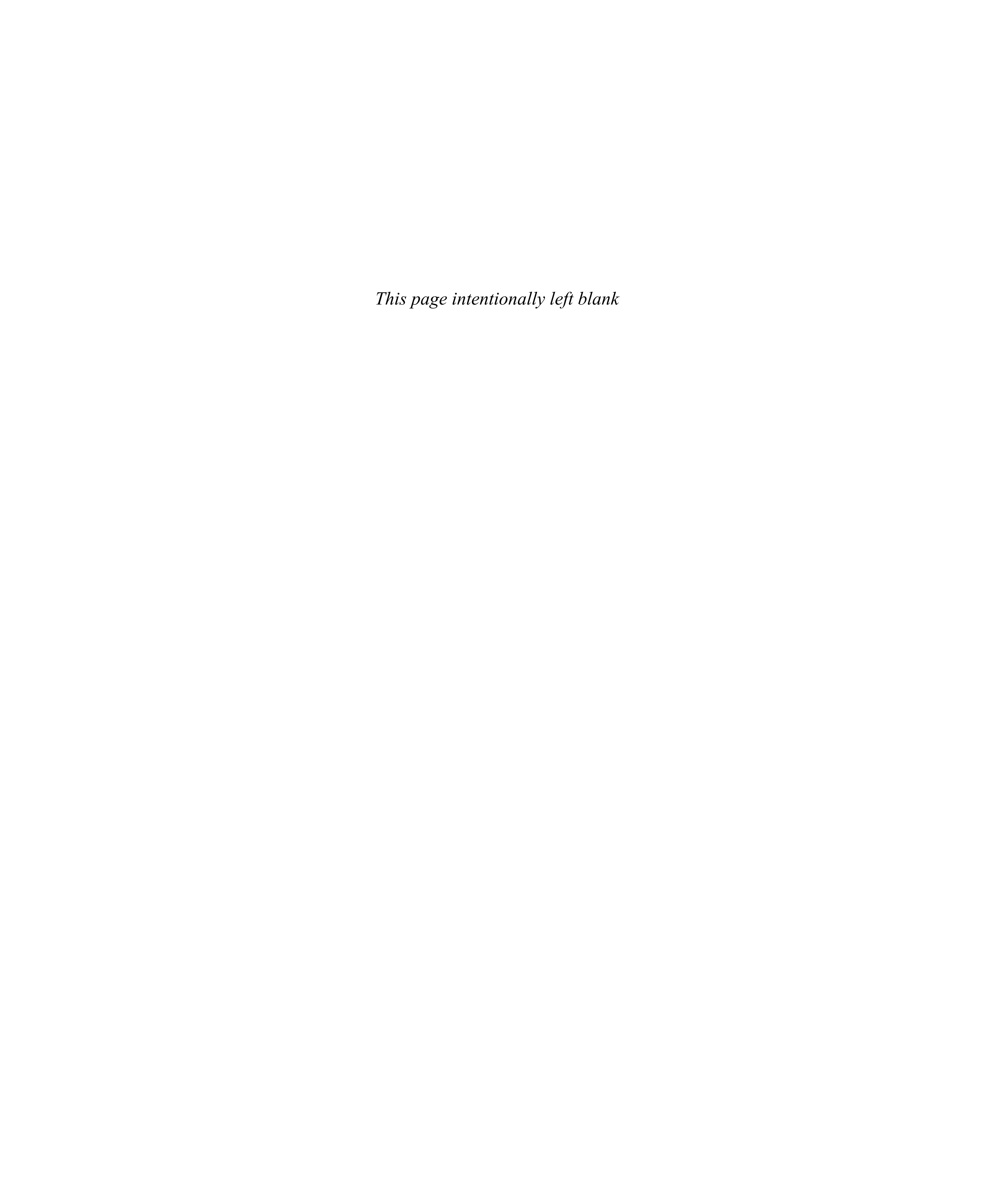

The Real World
2nd edition
an introduction to sociology
Kerry Ferris
and
Jill Stein



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The Real World

Second Edition






W. W. NORTON





The Real World

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Second Edition



Kerry Ferris and Jill Stein



W. W. Norton & Company has been independent since its founding in 1923, when William Warder Norton and Mary D. Herter Norton first published lectures delivered at the People's Institute, the adult education division of New York City's Cooper Union. The Nortons soon expanded their program beyond the Institute, publishing books by celebrated academics from America and abroad. By mid-century, the two major pillars of Norton's publishing program—trade books and college texts—were firmly established. In the 1950s, the Norton family transferred control of the company to its employees, and today—with a staff of four hundred and a comparable number of trade, college, and professional titles published each year—W. W. Norton & Company stands as the largest and oldest publishing house owned wholly by its employees.

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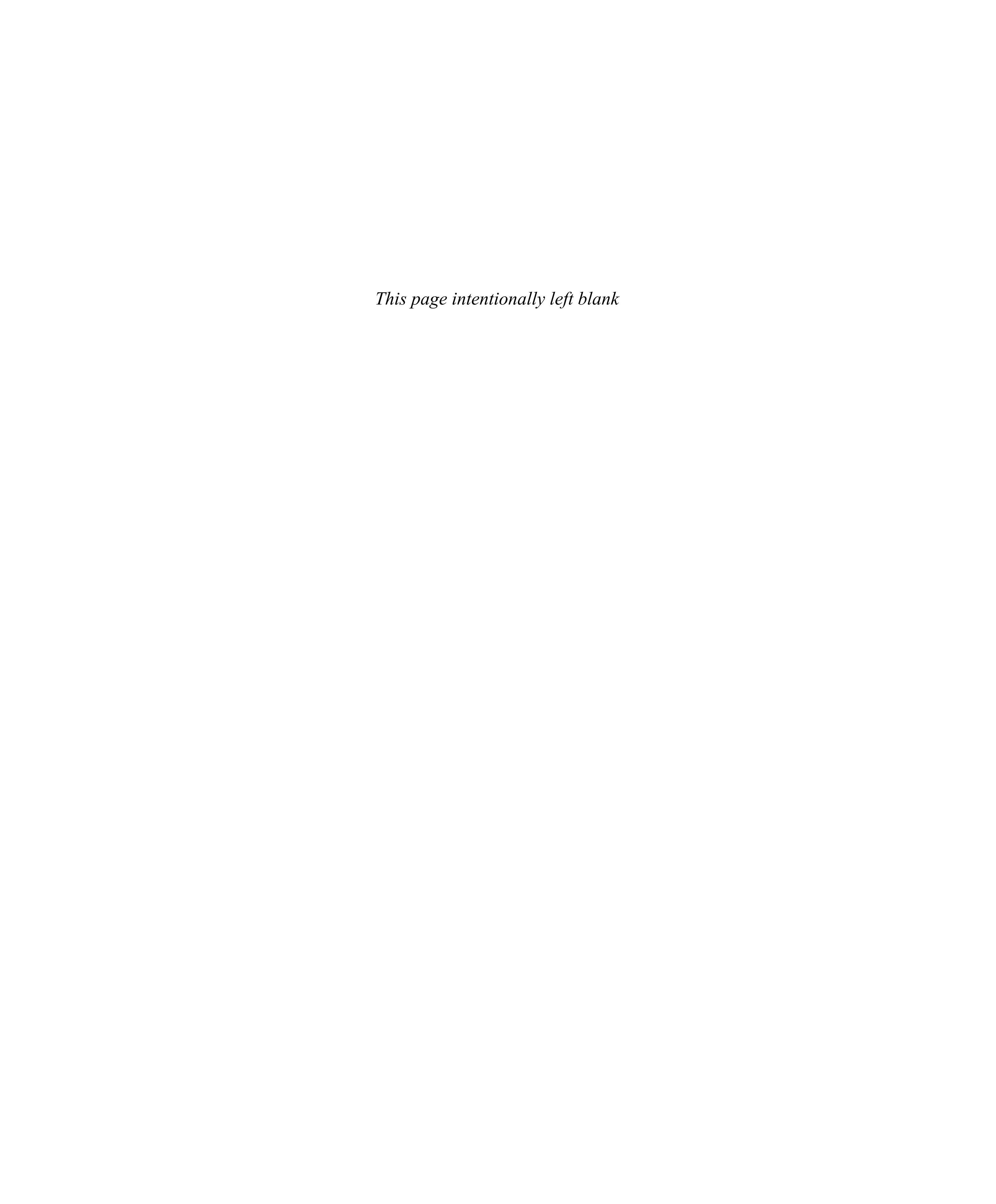
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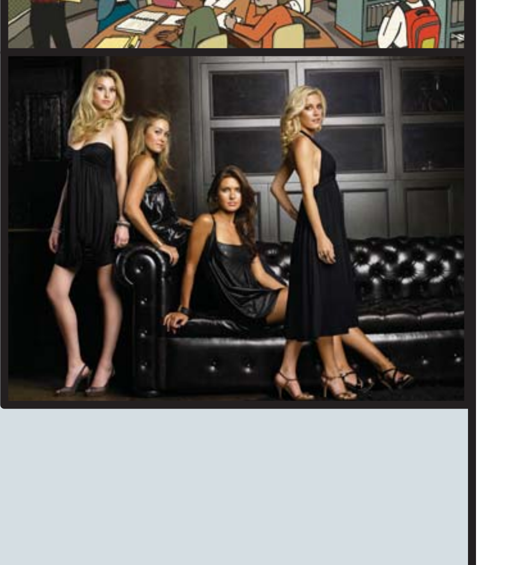
Kerry Ferris is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Northern Illinois University. She uses ethnographic methods to study fame as a system of social power. Currently, she is researching the lives of professional celebrity impersonators and analyzing the emotions communicated by celebrities in red-carpet interviews.



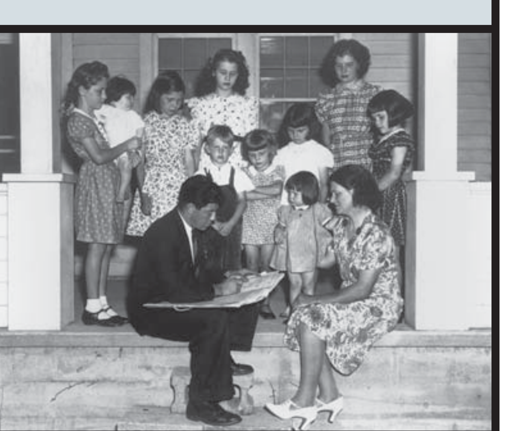
Jill Stein is Associate Professor of Sociology and Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Santa Barbara City College. In addition to teaching introduction to sociology every semester, she has studied narrative processes in twelve-step programs, the role of popular culture in higher learning, and group culture among professional rock musicians.



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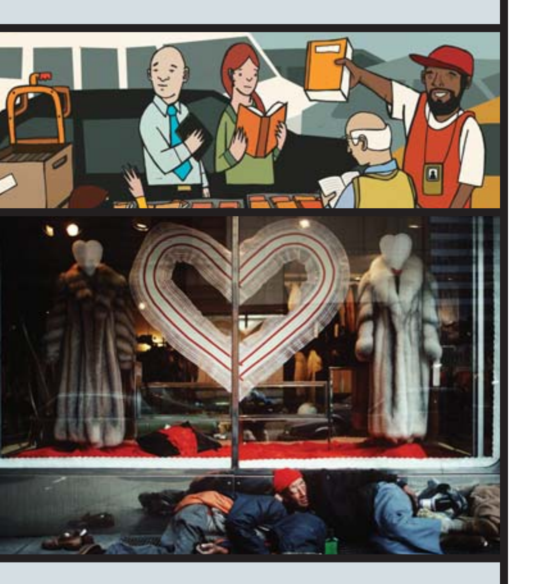


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Preface

It's time for a new Introductory Sociology textbook that is really new.

After years of experience in college and university classrooms, teaching Introductory Sociology to thousands of students from all backgrounds and walks of life, we had learned a lot about what works and what doesn't when it comes to making sociology exciting and effective. As seasoned instructors, we had developed an approach to teaching and learning that reflected our passion for the subject and our concern with pedagogy. But we were having trouble finding a textbook that encompassed all the elements we had discovered and that made such a difference in our experience. We were tired of the same old formulas found in almost every textbook. And we figured we were not alone. Other students and instructors were probably equally frustrated with repetitive formats, stodgy styles, and seemingly irrelevant materials. That is a great misfortune, for sociology, at its best, is a discipline that is both intellectually stimulating and personally resonant. While the impetus to write this textbook began as a way of answering our own needs, our goal became to create a textbook of even greater benefit to others who might also be looking for something new.

We wrote those words when we embarked on the first edition of *The Real World*, and they are equally true as we roll out the newly revised second edition. We are gratified by the response the textbook has received from instructors and students alike, so we are preserving many of the features that made the first edition a success. At the same time we have made sure to update material and add new examples so that the book remains as current and cutting-edge as possible. For students and instructors, we have maintained a writing style that we hope is accessible and interesting as well as scholarly. One of the basic pedagogical strengths of this textbook is its focus on everyday life, the mass media, and popular culture. In the second edition, we have also included numerous examples in each chapter that deal with the increasingly important role of technology in postmodern society. We know that the combination of these themes is inherently appealing to students. And since the new generation of sociology instructors is looking for something different, another of this book's strengths is an integrated emphasis on critical thinking and analytic skills. Rather than merely presenting or reviewing major concepts in sociology, which can often seem dry and remote, we seek to make the abstract more concrete through real-world applications.

In this text we take a fresh theoretical approach appropriate to our contemporary world. While we emphasize the interactionist perspective, we cover a range of theoretical thought, including postmodernism. We also build innovative methodological exercises into each chapter. We present material that is familiar and relevant to students in a way that allows them to make profound analytic connections between their individual lives and the structure of their society. We provide instructors with ways to reenergize their teaching, and we give even General Education students a reason to be fascinated by and engrossed in their sociology courses. We do this by throwing out the old formulas and bringing our insight, experience, and intellectual rigor to bear on a new way of teaching Introductory Sociology.

Whether you are a student or an instructor, you have probably seen a lot of textbooks. As authors, we have thought very carefully about how to write this textbook and how to make it more meaningful and effective for you. We think it is important to point out the unique features of this textbook and to tell you why they are included and what we hope you will get out of them.

Part Introductions and Original Research

The 16 chapters in this text are grouped into five Parts, and each Part has its own introductory essay. Each Part Introduction focuses on a piece of original sociological research highlighting the major themes that group the chapters together. The in-depth discussion of the featured book shows what the real work of academic sociologists consists of and reveals how sociological research frequently unites topics covered in separate chapters in introductory textbooks.

Opening Vignettes

Each chapter begins with an opening vignette which gives students an idea about the topics or themes they will encounter in the chapter. The vignettes are drawn from everyday life, the media, arts, and popular culture, and they are designed to grab your attention and stimulate your desire to learn more by reading the chapter that follows.

How to Read This Chapter

After the vignette, you will find a section that provides you with some goals and strategies that we believe will be useful in reading that particular chapter. We know from our experience in teaching Introductory Sociology that it is often worthwhile to let students know what to expect in advance so that they can better make their way through the material. Not all chapters require the same approach; we want to bring to your attention what we think is the best approach to each one.

SocIndex

This list of "factoids" at the beginning of each chapter is divided into three categories: "Then and Now," which makes historical comparisons; "Here and There," which makes cross-cultural comparisons; and "This and That," which makes more general comparisons or contrasts. The SocIndex is the one place in this book where we will not be explaining the significance of an example for you. This tactic is meant as a challenge—to make students think about the variety of human social experience and to connect the statistics or stories presented in the SocIndex with the topics, theories, and themes of each chapter. You may want to refer back to the SocIndex when you reach the end of a chapter—by that time, the links will certainly be clear.

Theory in Everyday Life

Although we provide thorough coverage in Chapter 2, we find that students often need additional help with understanding the mechanics of social theory and how to apply it to various real-world phenomena. These boxes in every chapter break down the major theoretical approaches and illustrate how each perspective might be used to analyze a particular real-world case study. This serves as a simple, practical model for students to then make their own applications and analyses.

Bolded In-Text Terms

As a student of sociology, you will be learning many new concepts and terms. Throughout each chapter, you will see a number of words or phrases in bold type. You may already recognize some of these from their more common vernacular use. But it is important to pay special attention to the way that they are used sociologically. For this reason you will find definitions in the margins of each page, where you can refer to them as you read. You should consider these bolded words and phrases your "tools" for doing sociology. As you progress through the chapters in this textbook, you will be collecting the contents of a toolkit that you can use to better understand yourself and the world around you. The bolded terms can also be found in the Glossary at the back of the book.

Relevance Boxes

In each chapter you will find Relevance Boxes with three different themes: "On the Job," "In Relationships," and "Changing the World." Relevance Boxes allow students to see the practical implications of sociology in their lives. "On the Job" explores the ways different people use sociological insights in a variety of work settings. "In Relationships" looks at how sociology can help us to better understand our friendships, intimate partnerships, and family relations. "Changing the World" focuses on the role sociology and its insights play in bringing about social change. We include these boxes to show how taking this course could bear fruit in your life beyond just fulfilling your college requirements.

Data Workshops

Each chapter features two Data Workshops, one on "Analyzing Everyday Life" and one on "Analyzing Mass Media and Popular Culture." Data Workshops are designed to give students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the practice of sociology while they are learning. We think this is one of the fun parts of being a sociologist. Students will use one of the research methods covered in Chapter 3 to deal with actual data from the real world—whether they are data they collect themselves or raw data provided from another source. The Data Workshops lead students through the process of analyzing data using the conceptual tools they have just acquired in the chapter. Each Data Workshop offers two options for completion from which instructors can choose. The Data Workshops can serve as a homework assignment, small-group activity, in-class discussion, or material for an essay. The Data Workshops can also be found on the Study Space website for the textbook, where students can submit completed work online.

Global Perspective Boxes

While this textbook focuses primarily on contemporary American society, we believe that in this time of increasing globalization, it is also important to look at other societies around the world. Each chapter includes a Global Perspective Box that highlights some of the differences and similarities between the United States and other cultures. This feature will help students develop the ability to see comparative and analogous patterns across cultures, which is one of the key functions of a sociological perspective.

Images and Graphics

We think that it is important to include not only written information but also images and graphics in the textbook. This kind of presentation helps students absorb a variety of materials and learn in different ways. We also know that students share our interest in mass media and popular culture, and we want to show the connections between real life and sociological thinking. For these reasons, you will find many kinds of visual images and graphics in each chapter. These are not just decorations; they are an integral part of the text, so please study these as carefully as you would the rest of the printed page.

Closing Comments

Each chapter ends with a set of closing comments that wrap up the discussion and give some final thoughts about the important themes that have been covered. This gives us a chance not so much to summarize or reiterate but to reflect, in a slightly different way, on what we have discussed, as well as to point to the future. We hope that the closing comments will give you something to think about, or even talk about with others, long after you've finished reading the chapter.

End-of-Chapter Materials

The end of each chapter contains a variety of materials that will enhance the learning process. The Chapter Summary provides a succinct review of the chapter's main theories and concepts. The Questions for Review not only helps you prepare for exams but also encourages you to extrapolate and apply what you have learned to other relevant examples. The Suggestions for Further Exploration provides a list of additional readings (fiction, nonfiction, and scholarly research), movies, music, websites, video games, and even field trips that are relevant to the topics of the chapter. Pursuing these suggestions will deepen your understanding of each chapter's themes and should be enjoyable too.

In our experience, the most important thing for students to take away from an introductory sociology class is a sociological perspective—not just a storehouse of facts, which will inevitably fade over time. Sociology promises a new way of looking at and thinking about the social world, which can serve students in good stead no matter what they find themselves doing in the future. We hope that this textbook delivers on that promise, making introductory sociology an intellectually stimulating and personally relevant enterprise for professors and students, in the classroom as well as outside it.

Resources for Students

The practical study aids and exciting new media that accompany *The Real World* are designed to extend the themes of the book and inspire students to connect what they learn in the classroom with the social worlds around them.



The Real World ebook Available at NortonEbooks.com

"Same great book, half the price"

The Real World is also available in the Norton ebook format. An affordable and convenient alternative, the ebook retains the content of the print book and allows students to highlight and take notes with ease.

Everyday Sociology Blog www.everydaysociologyblog.com

Designed for a general audience, this exciting and unique online forum encourages visitors to actively explore sociology's relevance to popular culture, mass media, and everyday life. Karen Sternheimer of the University of Southern California moderates the blog, and four other sociologist contributors write biweekly postings on topical subjects. the Everyday Sociology Blog is organized around such categories as Popular Culture and Consumption; Social Problems, Politics and Social Change; Crime and Deviance; Behind the Headlines; Relationships, Marriage and Family; Theory; and Video: Everyday Sociology Talk.

StudySpace www.wwnorton.com/studyspace

Based on proven learning strategies, the StudySpace website contains assignments that will help you *organize* your study, *learn* essential course material, and *connect* your knowledge across chapters and concepts. *The Real World*'s StudySpace contains free and open study tools and links to premium content.

ORGANIZE

- Chapter Reviews
- Chapter Outline
- Printable Study Sheet

LEARN

- Diagnostic Quizzes offer diagnostic feedback to students over the text content
- Vocabulary Flashcards
- Learning Objectives

CONNECT

- Data Exercises challenge students to apply concepts with recent real-world data
- Everyday Sociology Blog RSS feed
- Everyday Exercises (based on Everyday Sociology Blog postings)
- The Norton Slideshow Maker with Visual Sociology Exercises allows students to use their own photographs and captions to respond to questions
- Video Clip Quizzes focus on the Instructor DVD content
- Sociology in the News RSS feed

Resources for Instructors

Sociology in Practice Documentary DVDs

These DVDs contain over four hours of video clips drawn from documentaries by independent filmmakers. The *Sociology in Practice* DVD series has been expanded to include a new DVD of 21 documentary clips on inequality. The DVDs are ideal for initiating classroom discussion and encouraging students to apply sociological concepts to popular and real-world issues. The clips are also offered in streaming versions on StudySpace. Each streamed clip is accompanied by a DVD quiz.

Instructor's Website wwnorton.com/instructors

The Instructor's Website features instructional content for use in lecture and distance education, including coursepacks, test-item files, PowerPoint lecture slides, images, figures, and more.

The Instructor's Website features

- FREE, customizable Blackboard, WebCT, Angel, and D2L coursepacks
- Instructor's Manual
- Discussion Boards for smaller, more focused discussions about the Everyday Sociology Blog
- Lecture PowerPoints with Clicker Questions
- Art from book in PowerPoint and JPEG formats
- Glossary
- Test Bank in ExamView, WebCT, Blackboard, and RTF formats
- Website quizzes in Blackboard and WebCT formats

New Online Course-specific Blackboard Coursepack Content

Written by Christina Partin of University of South Florida and Pasco-Hernandez Community College. Each chapter contains 20 multiple-choice questions unique to the coursepack as well as a WebQuest activity and rationale. WebQuests encourage students to explore sociological topics using preselected online resources. Each WebQuest introduces a topic, gives students a task to complete, and provides the resources necessary to complete the task.

New Online Instructor's Forum

This new instructor website allows instructors to submit questions and other teaching materials and browse an evolving bank of materials submitted by other faculty. For more information, please visit wwnorton.com/instructors

Expanded Instructor's Manual

Written by Natasha Chen Christensen of Monroe Community College. *New* materials include:

- One service learning project per chapter
- Everyday Sociology Blog exercises
- Handouts for Data Workshops and estimated completion times
- Suggested documentary clips from the *Sociology in Practice* DVD (divided by chapter) including a description of how to incorporate them in the classroom

Expanded materials include longer recommended film, reading, and web reference lists. In addition, there will be a section on teaching in the online classroom by Christina Partin of University of South Florida and Pasco-Hernandez Community College. Available in print and PDF.

Expanded Test Bank

Written by Neil Dryden of University of California, Santa Barbara and Jill Stein. Each chapter includes a new concept map and 30 new multiple-choice questions bringing the total to approximately 20 True/False, 75 multiple-choice, and 10 essay questions per chapter. *New* features include graphs and tables from the text that are reproduced in the test bank and followed by a series of new questions regarding the material covered in the image. This test bank will include concept maps as well as labels for concept, question type, and difficulty for the multiple-choice questions. Available in print, Word, ExamView, and Blackboard, and WebCT formats.

DVD Library

Integrate engaging examples from television and film with the Norton DVD Library (1 per 50 new copies ordered).

Netflix Offer

Create your own video list! With orders of 100 or more new copies, Norton will provide a four-month subscription to Netflix. During the term of subscription, instructors may rent up to three DVDs at a time from Netflix's library of over 50,000 titles. The Instructor's Manual provides advice on incorporating many selections from the Netflix library into lectures.

Transparencies

Lecture-ready transparencies of all figures and selected maps from the text.

Acknowledgments

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We have many others to thank as well. We are especially grateful to our project editors, Rebecca Homiski and Sarah Mann; production manager Jane Searle; and editorial assistants Kate Feighery, Sarah Johnson, and Becky Charney, for managing the countless details involved in creating this book. Copy editor Ellen Lohman did a marvelous job suggesting improvements to the manuscript that have contributed in important ways to the book's final form. Stephanie Romeo and Julie Tesser showed wonderful creativity in the photo research that they did for *The Real World.* Electronic media editor Eileen Connell and ancillary editor Rachel Comerford developed the best textbook support materials in sociology. Finally, art director Rubina Yeh, along with Alex Meyer, Gia-Bao Tran, John McAusland, and Hope Goodell deserve special thanks for creating the beautiful design and art for the book. And we are very appreciative of the exceptional Norton "travelers"; it is through their efforts that this book has gotten out into the world.

In the course of our creating the second edition, many instructors offered advice and comments on particular chapters, or in some cases, large sections of the text. We are deeply indebted to them.

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We wish to especially thank Al Ferris for his wise and generous counsel in helping us to establish our corporate identity and at every juncture along the way. Thanks to Kevin Ebenhoch for his friendly and efficient services. We would like to thank our families and friends whose encouragement and support helped to sustain us through the length of this project and beyond. It is also with great pleasure that we thank Greg Wennerdahl and David Unger, respectively—your presence in our lives feels like our "bonus" for completing the first edition, and we look forward to sharing many happy returns (and future editions) with you.

We are grateful to colleagues who have served as mentors in our intellectual development and as inspiration to a life of writing. And finally, we offer our thanks to all of the students we have had the privilege to work with over the years. Getting to share the sociological imagination with you makes it all worthwhile.

Kerry Ferris
Jill Stein

PART I Thinking Sociologically and Doing Sociology



David came from a well-heeled Philadelphia family, attended Harvard Law School, spent his summers sailing yachts, and clerked for a Supreme Court Justice.

Pepper went to Yale when the school had just begun to admit female students, and some campus buildings didn't even have women's restrooms. She wrote the sex advice column for *Glamour* magazine for nine years.

Andrew is an outspoken Roman Catholic priest and the author of over 50 best-selling mystery novels.

Joe endured the Great Depression and violent anti-Semitism as a child. He worked as a supermarket clerk and served in the Army during World War II, but it was a series of trips to India that made the biggest impact on his life.

Jessie was a "corsetless coed," a term for young women in the 1920s who rejected the restrictive undergarments of their mothers' era and instead rolled their stockings down below their knees.

What do these people have in common? They are all prominent American sociology professors. You may not have heard of them (yet), but they have each made an exceptional impact on their profession:

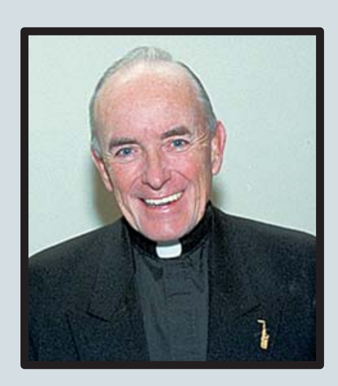
David Riesman made sociology a household word with his influential study of American character and culture, *The Lonely Crowd*. He earned a JD (but never a PhD) and was a professor at the University of Chicago and Harvard. Pepper Schwartz, sociology professor at the University of Washington, is a leading researcher on sex and intimate relationships. Andrew Greeley, now at the University of Arizona, ran the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for many years and continues to research the sociology of religion as an associate there. Joseph Gusfield, a pioneering sociologist in the area of alcohol use and abuse, is Professor Emeritus in the department of sociology at the University of California–San Diego. And Jessie Bernard, the "grande dame" of American sociology, was a professor at Pennsylvania State University for most of her career, studying women, marriage, and the family. The American Sociological Association gives an annual award in her name to a scholar whose career in the study of gender is as distinguished as Bernard's.

Their stories are compiled in *Authors of Their Own Lives: Intellectual Autobiographies of Twenty American Sociologists*. Edited by University of California–Berkeley professor Bennett Berger, it's a collection of autobiographical essays by well-known contemporary sociologists in a variety of fields. Each sociologist tells the story of entering the discipline and navigating a career path in academia—the obstacles he encountered, the triumphs he experienced, and the relationships between his personal life and his professional career.



Their paths to sociology were very different, and they each taught and researched different topics. But despite these differences, they share a way of looking at the world. Sociologists have a unique perspective called the "sociological imagination." In fact, we hope that you will acquire your own version of the sociological imagination over the course of this term. Then you will share something in common with the professors who tell their stories in Berger's book.

David Riesman, Andrew Greeley, Pepper Schwartz, and the others also hold in common their commitment to sociological theories and concepts. This means that their ideas, and the questions they ask and answer, are guided by the established traditions of sociological thought. They may build on those traditions or criticize them, but every sociologist engages in a theoretical dialogue that links centuries and generations. You will



Andrew Greeley

become part of this dialogue as you learn more about sociological theory.

Finally, Riesman, Greeley, Schwartz, and the rest conduct their research using specific sociological methods. Whether quantitative or qualitative, these means of gathering and analyzing data are distinctive to sociology, and every sociologist develops research projects using the methods best suited to the questions she wants to answer.


Pepper Schwartz

In the introduction to *Authors of Their Own Lives*, Berger states that he wants to reveal "the presence of the person in the work, the author in the authored" (p. xv)—in other words, he wants to show how a sociologist's personal journey affects her professional legacy. Berger also believes that knowing something about an author's life helps students understand her work—and we agree with him. A person's values, experiences, and family context all shape her interests and objectives—and this is as true of eminent sociologists like Jessie Bernard as it will be for you.

In the following section, we will introduce you to the discipline of sociology and the sociological imagination (Chapter 1), to sociology's theoretical traditions (Chapter 2), and to its research methodologies (Chapter 3). This section is your first opportunity to get to know sociology—its topics, theories, and research practices.

Perhaps someday your intellectual autobiography will be added to those of Riesman, Greeley, Schwartz, and the rest—and your story will start by opening this book . . .



CHAPTER 1

Sociology and the Real World

Lauren continues to feud with newly engaged Heidi, accusing her of spreading nasty rumors. Whitney struggles at *Teen Vogue*, and after a trip to Paris, decides to quit. She finds a new job at a public relations firm where Lauren is also offered a position. Lauren and childhood friend Lo buy a house together in the Hollywood hills; despite some friction with Audrina, they invite her to live with them. Lauren finds out that Brody has been seeing someone else, so she hooks up with former boyfriend Stephen. Heidi and Spencer take a "relationship vacation" but later reunite. . . .

Eleven two-person teams—including married ministers, dating Goths, best friends, a grandfather and grandson, and two sets of siblings—race 30,000 miles through 10 countries on four continents in just 21 days, competing for various prizes along the way, until the winners ultimately claim $1,000,000 in the final leg. The contestants are required to perform tasks as they encounter "roadblocks" or "detours" before getting to their next destination. One team must milk a camel and then drink it, while another must learn a traditional dance and perform it in front of a crowd of locals. One team has to don protective gear and run through a barrage of fireworks, while another jumps into the hold of a boat containing 500 live crabs to find the one painted with race colors. . . .

On the very same day that Renee Giunta gives birth to her third child, her husband Paul is in a devastating car accident that requires months of arduous rehabilitation. It's been over two years and he still has not returned home, because the Giunta home cannot accommodate his wheelchair. But the family is about to receive a miracle of sorts. They are sent away on a vacation to Disney World, while a team of hundreds of workers steps in to tear down and rebuild their home—a project that would ordinarily take months to complete—all in just one week. The Giuntas return to a cheering crowd of neighbors and tour their newly remodeled, redecorated, and landscaped home, where they can live together again all under one roof. . . .

Is any of this real? Yes . . . kind of. It's "reality television"—specifically MTV's *The Hills*, CBS's *The Amazing Race*, and ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. And there's a lot more where that came from. The spring 2008 weekly television lineup featured no fewer than 40 reality shows among the major networks and cable stations, with countless more programs in the works for the future. *The Real World*, *American Idol*, *LA Ink*, *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, *Top Chef*, *The Biggest Loser*, *Wife Swap*, *America's Next*

SocIndex

Then and Now

1968: The percentage of college undergraduates who say they discuss social issues with friends or family: over 30%

2000: The percentage of college undergraduates who say they discuss social issues with friends or family: less than 16%

Here and There

United States: A 2002 survey reveals that 51% of the "DotNet" generation (15-to-25-year-olds) use their purchasing power as the primary vehicle for expressing their political and social views

Sweden: In a 2005 survey, 28% of all Swedes between the ages of 16 and 29 say that they boycotted products for political or social reasons

This and That

In 2004, over 12 million, or roughly 44%, of 18-to-24-year-old American citizens have no college experience

A 2004 survey reveals that 18-to-24-year-olds with no college experience are significantly less likely to feel they can make a difference in their communities than their college-attending counterparts

Top Model, and *Deadliest Catch* are just a few of the entries from that time period. Some of the shows claim to follow real people through their everyday lives or on the job, while others impose bizarre conditions on participants (like stranding them on a desert island), subject them to stylized competitions and gross-out stunts, or make their dreams come true. Millions tune in every week to see real people eat bugs, get fired, suffer romantic rejection, reveal their poor parenting, get branded as fat or ugly, cry over their misfortunes, or get voted out of the house or off the island—mortifying themselves on camera for the possibility of success, money, or fame.

Why are we so interested in these people? Because people are interesting! Because we are people too—no matter how different we are from the folks on reality TV, we are part of the same society, and for that reason we are curious about how they live. We compare their lives with ours, wonder how common or unusual they or we are, and marvel at the fact that we are all part of the same, real world. We too may want to win competitions, date an attractive guy or girl, find a high-profile job, feel pretty or handsome, be part of an exclusive group, have a lovely home and family. We may even want to get on a reality show ourselves.

Reality television is interesting because of the social dynamics it reveals. However contrived or formulaic the set-ups are, the issues that each show deals with—interpersonal disputes, family and work issues, racial and regional identities, class, wealth, and poverty, sexuality and gender conflicts, disabilities, body images and standards of beauty, the role of the individual in a larger group—are all sociological issues. Sociology as an academic discipline can help us explain the things that happen on-screen in reality television and the things that happen off-screen in real life.

Sociology allows us to peer into the lives and worlds of many different kinds of people, in many different settings—and we don't have to wait for TV producers to make it happen. Sociology offers us insights into our own lives as well as the lives of others and presents systematic, scientific ways of understanding those lives. Sociology gives us tools to wield as we navigate our everyday social worlds, and it shows us ways of understanding the forces that shape and constrain us in those worlds. Sociology helps us understand both *The Real World* and the real world.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

With this first chapter, you are embarking on a fascinating journey as you learn to see, think, and analyze yourself and the world around you from a sociological perspective. It is critical that you try to gain the fundamental tools for understanding presented here. They will be the foundation on which you will build new knowledge and insights into social life.

As authors and teachers, we also want to encourage you to develop some basic study techniques that will assist in your success as a new student to sociology (and perhaps beyond). You may want to highlight portions of the text or take notes while you are reading. Mark passages you don't understand, or keep a list of questions you might have about any aspect of the chapter. Don't hesitate to discuss those questions with your instructor or fellow students; sometimes such dialogues can be one of the most gratifying parts of the learning process. Finally, we recommend that you attend class regularly, as there is really no substitute for the shared experience that happens when you do sociology with others.

We are excited to take this journey of discovery with you. Though you may know a lot about social life already, we hope to introduce you to even more—about yourself and the world around you—and to provide you valuable tools for the future. We wouldn't want you to miss a thing. So now here is where we start. . . .

What Does Society Look Like?

Can you see **society**? Really see it? If you can, can you describe it? What does it look like, sound like, smell, taste, or feel like? These are difficult questions to answer. Despite the fact that we talk about, operate in, and make reference to "society" constantly, we are challenged when it comes to describing it—we realize we are talking about something we can't actually see.

Introductory sociology texts often present society to students as *sui generis*—as an object in itself. This is useful in convincing students that the study of society is a worthwhile enterprise. If society is an object, then it can be scrutinized and analyzed like any other object. Introductory texts also often advise students that what a sociologist does to society is much like what a geologist does to a rock, or what a biologist does to a living organism. Society becomes something to be scientifically weighed, measured, and dissected.

But what we find as we begin to dissect this object is that it is made up of countless other components—that things like "culture," "race," or the "working class" appear to be *sui generis* as well, more phenomena to examine by themselves. And these components can be broken down even further into seemingly endless bits and pieces. It seems daunting, even impossible, to imagine that we could analyze something so big, with so many parts, that we can't actually see its shape or boundaries. The question arises: is society a concrete object after all?

Here's a more useful question: if we can't see the whole of society, what *can* we see? We can see people living their lives, interacting with each other, working, playing, eating, dancing, fighting, grieving, gardening, bowling, driving in their cars. There are limitless observable phenomena for us to analyze sociologically, and they're happening all around us. In fact, we participate in them every moment of every day. What we will be investigating in this text are the most familiar things of all—the things we do together, every day.

People actively and collectively shape their lives, organizing their social interactions and relationships to produce a real and meaningful world; and they do this in patterned ways that we as social scientists can analyze. In this text, we will be concerned with the social processes that everyone experiences and how those social processes create the larger society of which we are all a part.

society a group of people who shape their lives in aggregated and patterned ways that distinguish their group from other groups

If we can't necessarily see society as a whole, we can at least observe it in its parts, and we can see how those parts are created, changed, and maintained, how they link together, how they shape and influence one another—and what our roles are in those processes. This is what society looks like.

Asking the Big Questions

People have been pondering the meaning of life for as long as they have been conscious. It is this ancient fascination with why we are here, how things work, and what is going to happen next that is the impetus for modern scientific discovery. Early explanations about the nature of the world and of social life in particular were based in tradition, superstition, and myth. Our ancestors accepted these understandings, which were rarely doubted. But with the rise of modern science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, new forms of knowledge and practices of discovery and verification were established, and during the nineteenth century the concept of "social science" began to emerge.

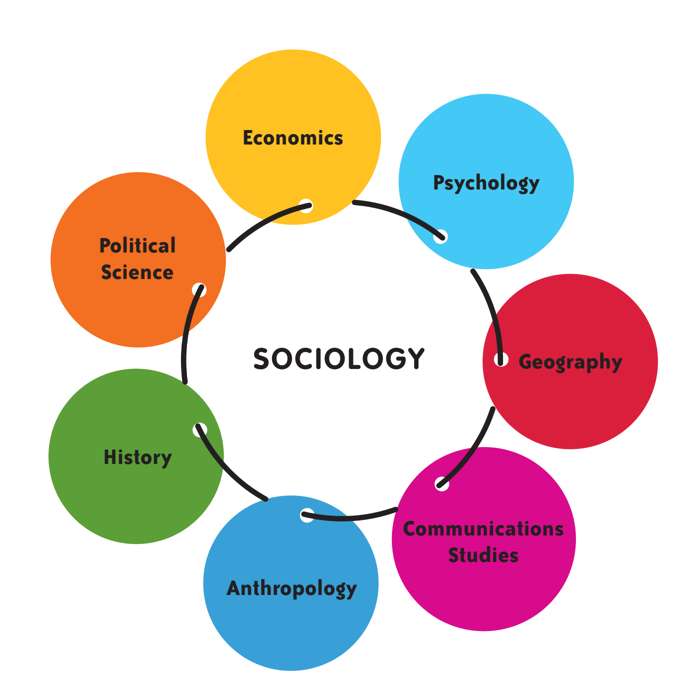


FIGURE 1.1 Sociology and the Social Sciences Sociology overlaps with other social sciences, but much of the territory it covers is unique.

In Relationships

Food and Eating

The need for food is instinctive—we need to eat in order to survive. But when we eat, especially in an affluent country like the United States, are we responding to instinctive drives or socially elaborated requirements? It may be instinctive to seek nourishment, but what, when, where, and with whom we eat, and how we feel about eating—all these are socially constructed, not instinctive.

Take the example of a restaurant meal, whether at Spago in Beverly Hills or at the McDonald's drive-thru down the street from your campus. Neither your cardboard platter of Chicken McNuggets nor your honey-lacquered duck breast with grilled foie gras is in any way naturally occurring. Nor is their meaning intrinsic: Spago is not upscale *sui generis*, nor is McDonald's necessarily vulgar or common. As a society, we create these ways of responding to our instinctual drives—we elaborate on our need for food, shaping a basic drive into something socially, culturally, and historically specific.

Perhaps most important, eating is often done in the company of others, whether the group is large (as in a college dorm's dining room or a military mess hall) or small (a couple on a date, or a family at the breakfast table). Food thus plays a role in many of our social relationships. Indeed, the word *companion* contains the Latin root for bread, *pan*, and literally means "someone to break bread with." In other words, our language explicitly links friendship with food.



Until recently, it was expected that women, as wives and mothers, would take on the responsibility of feeding their family members. Women still do most of the mealtime work—planning, shopping, cooking, and serving (DeVault 1991)—and are expected to show their love for and commitment to their families by doing this work. Think of your own mother or grandmother or aunt: unless your family is somewhat unusual, these women probably spent a good deal of time in the kitchen, and they may even have made an explicit connection between meal preparation and their love for you. How many times were you urged to eat—or eat more—to prove you loved Grandma rather than to satisfy your own hunger?

Although most people have no special training, almost everyone is what you might call a natural sociologist. By virtue of our membership in society, we already possess a great deal of background knowledge to help us form ideas about the way the world works. Every culture passes along to its members conventional wisdom that is taken as fact, and we are all casual observers of and active participants in our surroundings. Thus we tend to think of ourselves as experts in the area of life in society, but this is true only on a small scale. Most of what we know is based on personal experience and common sense. For example, we often assign characteristics to an entire group of people (women, police officers, only children, Germans) based on our experience with one member of that group. We formulate our opinions using conventional wisdom, background knowledge, and personal experience, sometimes combining them with guesswork, intuition, or blind faith.

There are certainly times when we will need to draw from this personal knowledge. At other times, though, it may present a stumbling block to deeper understanding. This is why, in some regards, doing sociology is a radical undertaking. It requires of us a willingness to suspend our own preconceptions, assumptions, and beliefs about the way things are. As sociologists, we need to learn to question everything, especially our own taken-for-granted notions about others and ourselves. Once these have been set aside, even temporarily, we gain a fresh perspective with which to uncover and discover aspects of social life we hadn't noticed before. We are

Ceremonial meals are especially important in forging and maintaining strong bonds. Wedding banquets celebrate the newly married couple as well as the new "in-law" ties created by their marriage. Holiday meals help families express their ethnic and religious ties (Pleck 2000); for example, in the Passover seder ritual, parsley, saltwater, and matzoh crackers have symbolic meanings related to the historic liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. And it's no accident that many first dates involve a meal along with whatever other activity is planned—dinner and a movie, dinner and dancing, dinner and a show. Researchers at University College London found that a meal, especially an extravagant one, is the most effective way to woo a love interest (Sozou and Seymour 2005).

Society didn't create our need for nourishment. But society surely shapes the way we eat and the relationships that food helps us form and sustain. Societies produce different cooking styles and preparation techniques, utilize different ingredients, consider different foodstuffs to be delicacies, and allow only certain people to indulge in the most prized culinary pleasures while others must be content with more mundane morsels. The values, hierarchies, and institutions of our society have all intervened in our drive to seek nourishment—to the point where we may no longer be responding to instinct at all but to other, clearly social imperatives: the need for a quick meal that fits into a busy day; the urge to be adventurous and taste an exotic cuisine; the desire to display the status implied by dining in elegant surroundings; or just the need to connect with other people. Food satisfies our social hungers as well as our physical appetite.



"Family" Meals Food and eating help us forge and maintain strong social bonds.

then able to reinterpret our previous understanding of the world, perhaps challenging, or possibly confirming, what we thought we already knew.

What Is Sociology?

Even among those working in the field, there is some debate about how **sociology** is defined. A look at the term's root parts, *socius* and *logos*, suggests that sociology means the study of society, which is a good place to start. A slightly more elaborate definition might say that sociology is the systematic or scientific study of human society and social behavior. This could include almost any level within the structure of society, from large-scale institutions and mass culture to small groups and relationships between individuals.

Another definition comes from Howard Becker, who suggests that sociology can best be understood as the study of people "doing things together" (Becker 1986). This definition reminds us that neither society nor the individual exists in isolation but that each is dependent on and intertwined with the other. It brings to mind the fundamental premise that humans are essentially social beings. Not only is our survival

sociology the systematic or scientific study of human society and social behavior, from large-scale institutions and mass culture to small groups and individual interactions

On the Job

Famous Sociology Majors

Sociology continues to be a popular major at colleges and universities in the United States and in other countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. According to the American Sociological Association, over 265,000 Bachelor of Arts degrees in sociology were awarded in the United States between 1995 and 2006. Clearly there are many reasons why students who have discovered sociology are enthusiastic about the subject. What may be less clear to new undergraduates, however, is how to turn their passion into a paycheck. Students thinking about majoring in the subject often ask, "What can I do with a degree in sociology?" Their parents may be asking the same question. Some students interested in academic careers will pursue graduate degrees in order to become professors and researchers—real practicing sociologists. But the vast majority of students with degrees in sociology will not necessarily become sociologists with a capital S. Their studies will have prepared them to be valuable, accomplished participants in a variety of different fields, including law and government, business administration, social welfare, public health, education, counseling and human resources, advertising and marketing, public relations and the media, and work in nonprofit organizations.

A major in sociology, in other words, can lead almost anywhere. And while the roster of previous sociology majors contains names both well known and unsung, from former president Ronald Reagan and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. to the public defender giving legal aid to low-income clients and the health care professional bringing wellness programs into large corporations, we would like to focus here on three important figures in American life you may not have associated with sociology.

The first individual may be the least likely to be identified as a sociology major, since his career was centered in the arts. Saul Bellow (1915–2005) was one of the most acclaimed American writers of the twentieth century; his numerous literary awards included the National Book Award (three times), the Pulitzer Prize, and the Nobel Prize in Literature. In addition to writing novels, he was also a successful playwright and journalist, and taught at several universities. Bellow was born in Montreal to Jewish parents, Russian émigrés who later settled in the slums of Chicago while he was still a child. He began his undergraduate studies in English at the University of Chicago, but left within two years after being told by the chair of the department that no Jew could really grasp English literature. He then enrolled at Northwestern University, graduating in 1937 with honors in sociology. Literary critics have noted that Bellow's background in sociology, as well as his own personal history, may have influenced both the style and subject of his work. Many of the great themes of American social life appear in his novels: culture, power, wealth and poverty, war, religion, the city, gender relations, and above all, the social contract that keeps us together in the face of forces that threaten to tear us apart.

Our next profile is of Maxine Waters (b. 1938), a nine-term member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Waters is considered by many to be one of the most powerful women in American politics and has gained a reputation as an outspoken advocate for women, children, people of color, and the poor. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, one of thirteen

contingent on the fact that we live in various kinds of groups (families, neighborhoods, dorms), but our very sense of self derives from our membership in society. In turn the accumulated activities of people doing things together create the patterns and structures we call society. So sociologists want to understand how humans affect society, as well as how society affects humans.

Broader definitions of the discipline are more readily accepted by a majority of sociologists, whereas more precise definitions are sometimes disputed. Disagreements arise, in part, because of the fact that sociology encompasses such a large terrain of possible subject matter. In later chapters, as we explore the field's development and some of its substantive areas, we will be able to clarify the myriad possibilities for defining sociology. For now, one way to better understand what sociology does is to contrast it with other social sciences. The **social sciences** are those disciplines that examine the human or social world, much as the natural sciences

children raised by a single mother, she began working at age thirteen in factories and segregated restaurants. After moving to Los Angeles, where she completed high school, she was hired as an assistant teacher and volunteered to be a coordinator in the newly formed Head Start program in Watts. She attended California State University, Los Angeles, and in 1970 earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology. Since 1976, Waters has served in public office, first in the California State Assembly and then in the U.S. House of Representatives, from the district that includes South Central Los Angeles. Throughout her years of public service, Waters has not shied away from tackling difficult and sometimes controversial issues, often the same issues that are of interest to sociologists. Some of her areas of concern have included affirmative action, community economic development, youth-training programs, affordable health care and housing, drug-abuse prevention and treatment, welfare reform, and equal justice under the law.



Saul Bellow **Maxine Waters** **Ahmad Rashad**

Our last sociology major is Ahmad Rashad (b. 1940), a former professional football player and award-winning sportscaster. Born Bobby Moore in Tacoma, Washington, he chose his current name (which means "admirable one led to truth") after being inspired by his mentor, Rashad Khalifa, an Egyptian émigré and Muslim religious leader. Rashad attended the University of Oregon, where he played wide receiver and was twice selected for the All-America team. Upon graduating in 1972 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology, he played for three National Football League teams: the St. Louis Cardinals, the Buffalo Bills, and most notably, the Minnesota Vikings, where he was selected for four Pro Bowl games. After his professional football career ended, Rashad began work as a sportscaster for NBC, where his duties included reporting, commentary, and analysis. He won an Emmy Award for writing about the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, Korea. The next year, he wrote a bestselling memoir, *Rashad: Vikes, Mikes and Something on the Backside*, in which he discussed not only his sports career but also the media, power, and race in America. Did sociology help Rashad make the transition from football player to sportscaster or better understand the dynamics of the sports world and its wider place in society? We'd like to think it was of some value to him along the way. In 1995, the University of Oregon acknowledged his extraordinary success by presenting him its Pioneer Award, the highest honor given to any alumnus.

examine the natural or physical world. Included in a list of the social sciences are such fields as anthropology, psychology, economics, political science, and sometimes history, geography, and communication studies. Each has its own particular focus on the social world. In some ways, sociology's territory overlaps with that of the other social sciences, even while maintaining its own unique approach.

Like history, sociology compares the past and the present in order to understand both; unlike history, sociology is more likely to focus on contemporary society. Sociology is interested in societies at all levels of development, while anthropology is more likely to concentrate on traditional or primitive cultures. Sociology looks at a range of social institutions, unlike economics or political science, each of which is focused on a single one. Like geography, sociology considers

social sciences the disciplines that use the scientific method to examine the social world; in contrast to the natural sciences, which examine the physical world

microsociology the level of analysis that studies face-to-face and small-group interactions in order to understand how those interactions affect the larger patterns and institutions of society

macrosociology the level of analysis that studies large-scale social structures in order to determine how they affect the lives of groups and individuals

the relationship of people to places, though geography is more concerned with the places themselves. And like communication studies, sociology examines human communication—at both the social and the interpersonal levels, rather than one or the other. Finally, sociology looks at the individual in relationship to external social forces, whereas psychology specializes in internal states of mind. As you can begin to see, sociology covers a huge intellectual territory, making it exceptional among the social sciences in taking a comprehensive, integrative approach to understanding human life.

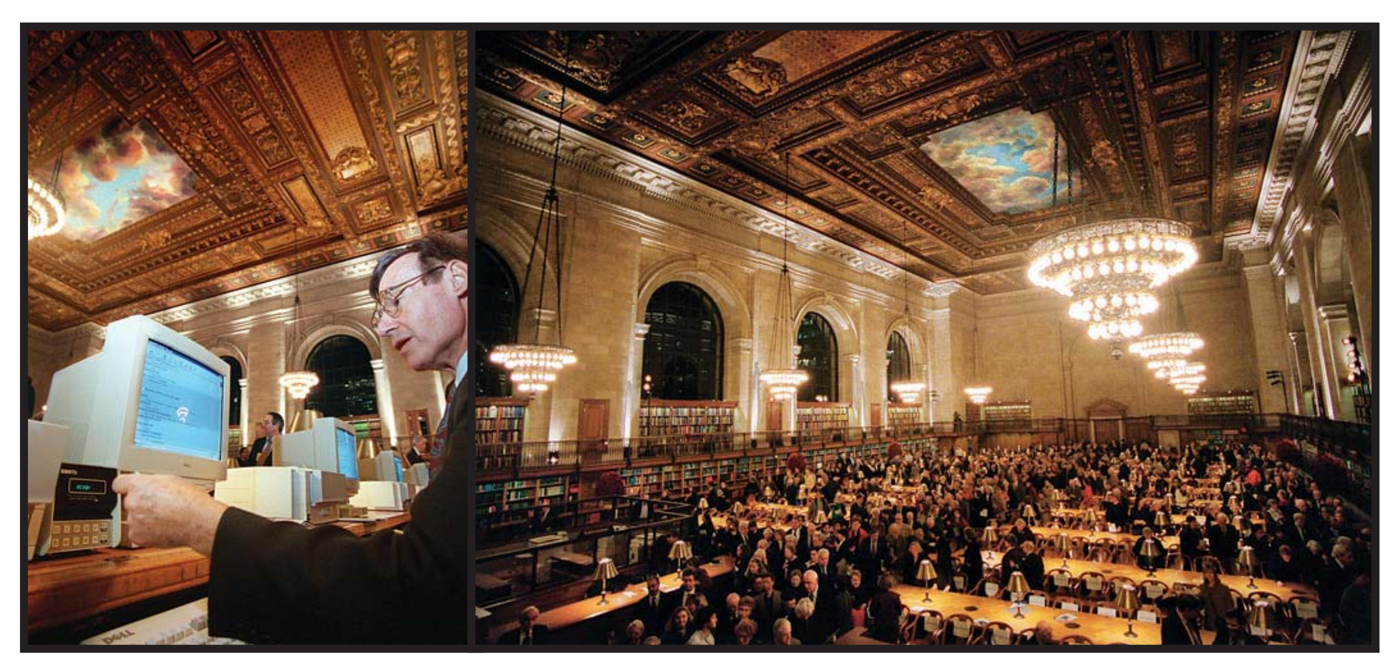
Levels of Analysis

Micro- and Macrosociology

There are different ways to approach the study of sociology. Consider a photographer with state-of-the-art equipment. She could view her subject through either a zoom lens or a wide-angle lens. Through the zoom lens she sees intricate details about the subject's appearance; through the wide-angle lens, she gets the "big picture" and a sense of the broader context in which the subject is located. Both views are valuable in understanding the subject, and both result in photographs of the same thing.

The different sociological perspectives are like the photographer's lenses, allowing us different ways of looking at a common subject (Newman 2000). Sociologists can take a **microsociological** (zoom lens) perspective or a **macrosociological** (wide-angle lens) perspective or any number of perspectives located on the continuum between the two.

Microsociology concentrates on the interactions between individuals and the ways in which those interactions construct the larger patterns, processes, and institutions of society. As the word indicates (*micro* means "small"), microsociology looks at the smallest building blocks of society in order to understand its large-scale structure. A classic example of research that takes a micro approach is Pam Fishman's article "Interaction: The Work Women Do" (1978). Like many scholars who had observed the feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s, Fishman was concerned with issues of power and domination in male-female relationships: Are men more powerful than women in our society? If so, how is this power created and maintained in everyday interactions? In her research, Fishman tape-recorded and analyzed heterosexual couples' everyday conversations in their homes. What she found were some real differences in the conversational strategies of men and women, as the transcript in Figure 1.2 illustrates.



Microsociology and Macrosociology Sociologists bring different levels of analysis to the study of people and groups. Microsociology zooms in to focus on individuals and their interactions in order to understand larger social structures. In contrast, macrosociology pulls back to study large-scale social processes and their effects on individuals and groups.

TRANSCRIPT

	Speaker	Text
1	F:	I didn't know that. (=) Um you know that ((garbage disposal on)) that organizational
	M:	Hmmm? (=)
2	F:	stuff about Frederick Taylor and Bishopsgate and all that stuff? (=) ⌈ in the early
	M:	UmHm ((yes)) ⌋
3	F:	1900's people were trying to fight favoritism to the schools (4)
	M:	That's what we needed. (18) |
4	F:	
	M:	never did get my smoked oysters, I'm going to look for ((inaudible)) (14) Should we try the
5	F:	OK. That's a change. (72) Hmm. That's very interesting. Did
	M:	Riviera French Dressing? (=)
6	F:	you know that teachers used to be men until about the 1840's when it became a female occupa-
	M:	
7	F:	tion? (2) Because they needed more teachers because of the increased enroll-
	M:	Nhhmm ((no)) (=)
8	F:	ment. (5) Yeah relatively and the status (7)
	M:	And the the salaries started going down probably. (=)
9	F:	⌈ There's two bottles I think ⌉
	M:	Um, it's weird. We're out of oil again. ⌊ Now we have to buy that. ⌋ ((whistling)) (8) Dressing
10	F:	It does yeah. (76) That's really interesting. They didn't start
	M:	looks good. See? (2) See babe? (1)
11	F:	using the test to measure and find the you know categorize and track people in American
	M:	
12	F:	schools until like the early 1900's after the army y'know introduced their array alpha things
	M:	
13	F:	to the draftees (?) And then it caught on with the schools and there was a lot of opposition right
	M:	
14	F:	at the beginning to that, which was as sophisticated as today's arguments. The same argu-
	M:	
15	F:	ments y'know (=) But it didn't work and they came (4) ⌈ heh
	M:	Yeah (=) Leslie White is probably right. ⌋

FIGURE 1.2 Gender and Conversational Patterns Conversation analysis allows us to see patterns like who interrupts more (men) and who asks more questions (women).

SOURCE: Fishman 1978



"The Work Women Do" For her famous microsociological article, Pam Fishman tape-recorded conversations between husbands and wives to learn about their different conversational strategies. She found that women ask three times as many questions.

As you can see, the woman is having a difficult time getting her husband to join her in the topic she proposes, the history of education. He frequently interrupts, changes the subject, fails to respond for long stretches, and even flips on the garbage disposal while she is trying to speak. She perseveres, trying to gain control of the conversation in order to be able to talk about education. Fishman recorded many such conversations and found a variety of patterns. One of her findings was that women ask nearly three times as many questions as men do. While other researchers have proposed that women's psychological insecurities are the reason for this finding, Fishman notes that women are in fact following a firmly held rule of conversational structure: when the speaker cannot guarantee that she will get a response, she is more likely to ask a question. Questions provoke answers; this makes them a useful conversational tool for those who may have less power in interpersonal relationships and in society at large. And women are more likely to be in this position than men. Thus, in her micro-level analysis of conversation, Fishman was able to see how macro-level (*macro* means "large") phenomena like gender and power are manifested in everyday interactions.

Macrosociology approaches the study of society from the opposite direction, by looking at large-scale social structure in order to determine how it affects the lives of groups and individuals. If we wanted to stick to the same topic of gender inequality, we could find plenty of examples of research projects that take a macro approach; many deal with the workplace. Despite the gains made in recent years, the U.S. labor market is still predominantly sex segregated—that is, men and women are concentrated in different occupations. For example, in 2007 some 99.3 percent of auto mechanics were male, whereas some 96.7 percent of secretaries and administrative assistants were female (U.S. Department of Labor, "Employed Persons," 2007). This feature of social structure, some argue, has a direct effect on the experiences of individual workers, male and female.

A related example comes from the work of Christine Williams (1995). She found that while women in male-dominated fields experience limits on their advancement (dubbed the "glass ceiling" effect), men in female-dominated occupations ride a "glass escalator": they experience unusually rapid rates of upward mobility. Here, then, we see a macro approach to the topic of gender and power: large-scale features of social structure (patterns of occupational sex segregation) create the constraints within which individuals and groups (women and men in the workplace) experience successes or failures in their everyday lives.

As you can see, these two perspectives make different assumptions about how society works: the micro perspective assumes that society's larger structures are shaped through individual interactions, while the macro perspective assumes that society's larger structures shape those individual interactions. It is useful to think of these perspectives as being on a continuum with each other; while some sociologists adhere to radically micro or exclusively macro perspectives, most are somewhere in between. In Chapter 2 we will explore some specific theoretical traditions within sociology, and you will be able to see where each falls along this continuum.

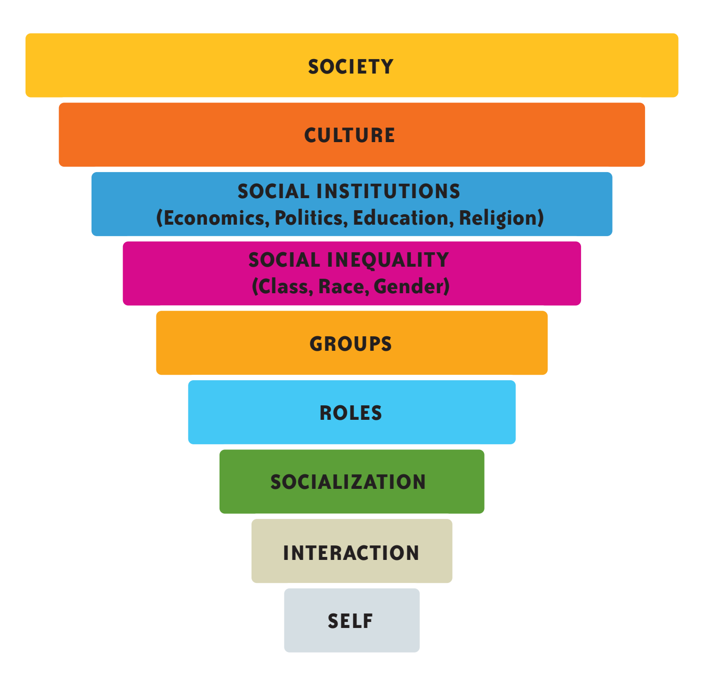


FIGURE 1.3 The Macro-Micro Continuum Sociology covers a wide range of topics at different levels of analysis.



Glass Ceilings and Glass Escalators Christine Williams's comparison of the occupational status of men in a female-dominated industry and women in a male-dominated industry is a good example of macrosociology.

Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

Another way that the discipline of sociology commonly divides up the study of society is by methodological approach. (Methodology involves gathering and analyzing data in order to establish certain facts, support certain theories, or disprove certain hypotheses about the social world.) Again, because of sociology's broad range and flexibility, there is room for a variety of different methods for studying society. As with the micro-macro divide, there is a similar polarization in the area of methodology, this time along a quantitative-qualitative divide (with many sociologists in between).

Sociologists who do **quantitative research** work with numerical data—that is, they translate the social world into numbers that can then be manipulated mathematically. Any type of social statistic is an example of quantitative data: you may have read in the newspaper, for instance, that in 2006 some 38 percent of male teenage drivers involved in fatal motor vehicle crashes had alcohol in their blood, compared with 22 percent of female teenage drivers (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety 2006). Quantitative methodologies distill large amounts of information into numbers that are more easily communicated to others.

Sociologists who do **qualitative research** work with nonnumerical data such as texts, written fieldnotes, interview transcripts, photographs, and tape recordings. Rather than condensing lived experience into a number, chart, or graph, qualitative researchers preserve the details of the cases they study. They may engage in participant observation, in which they enter the social world they wish to study; they may do in-depth interviews, analyze transcripts of conversations, glean data from historical books, letters, or diaries, or even use photos or videos in their investigations. Sociologist Gary Fine, for example, has observed a variety of different social worlds, including those of fantasy game players (1983), professional restaurant chefs (1996), and people who harvest wild mushrooms in the woods (1998)! Fine was able to discover important sociological insights through immersion in each of the subcultures he studied. Qualitative researchers like Fine preserve detail and diversity in their data by using interpretive rather than statistical analysis. In Chapter 3 we will explore some specific methodological traditions, and you will be able to see where each falls along the qualitative-quantitative continuum.

No matter what approach is taken, all sociologists seek to illuminate the connection between the individual and society. The great thing about our discipline is that whatever your interests may be, you can take a sociological approach to understanding them. For example, Dr. Stein does research on the careers of rock musicians (1997), the importance of popular music to college students (Stein, Rabow, and El Mouchi 1994; Rabow and Stein 1996), teaching about stigmatization and social justice (Rabow, Stein, and Conley 1999, 2001), and the use of narrative and humor in twelve-step programs (Pollner and Stein 1996, 2001). Dr. Ferris does research on *Star Trek* and soap opera fans (2001, 2004a), celebrity stalking (2005), talk-radio advice shows (2004b), and celebrity impersonators (forthcoming). While most of our research is done from microsociological and qualitative perspectives, we also use macrosociology and quantitative data when appropriate. Our friends and colleagues do work in a wide range of interesting areas as well: participating in feminist movements (Roth 2003), creating racial identity in cyberspace (Burkhalter 1999), changing culture through popular art (Sherwood 2006), experiencing and resisting gender harassment in the military (Miller 1997), feeling scared or angry about having sex offenders as neighbors (Burchfield and Mingus 2008), shaping news interviews through the use of language (Roth 2002), sexualizing the workplace (Van Leuven 1998, 2001), dressing to look like a gang member at school (Katz and Garot 2003), and planning a wedding (Sniezek 2005). Whatever inspires, interests, or confounds us, we can study it sociologically.

quantitative research research that translates the social world into numbers that can be treated mathematically; this type of research often tries to find cause-and-effect relationships

qualitative research research that works with nonnumerical data such as texts, fieldnotes, interview transcripts, photographs, and tape recordings; this type of research more often tries to understand how people make sense of their world

The Sociological Perspective

How do sociologists go about understanding human life in society? The first step is to develop what we call the *sociological perspective*. This can alternately be referred to as taking a sociological approach or thinking sociologically. In any case, it means looking at the world in a unique way and seeing it in a whole new light. This directive will remain our most important task throughout the course. It is what we hope you will acquire from reading this book: the ability to think sociologically.

The Sociological Imagination

One of the classic statements about the sociological perspective comes from sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959), who describes the one quality of mind that all the great social analysts seem to possess in common as the **sociological imagination**. By this he means the ability to understand "the intersection between biography and history," or the interplay of self and the world; this is sociology's task and its "promise."

Mills claims that most of us are "seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of our own lives and the course of world history." As individuals we may suffer and struggle without recognizing how our "troubles of milieu" (of our particular place or situation in life) are connected to the "issues of public social structure" (of what is happening at the level of society as a whole). We normally think of our own problems as being a private matter of character, chance, or circumstance, and we overlook the fact that these may be caused in part by, or are at least occurring within, a specific cultural and historical context. For example, if you can't find a job, you may feel that this is because you don't have the right skills, educational background, or experience. But it may also be the result of problems in the larger economy like outsourcing, downsizing, restrictive policies, changing technologies, or migration patterns. In other words, your individual unemployment may be part of a larger social and historical phenomenon, which means that no matter how skilled you are, there may be no job for you to find.

Most of the time we use psychological rather than sociological arguments to explain the way things are. For instance, we might look at someone who's carrying a large amount of credit card debt and, using psychological reasoning, focus on his lack of self-control or inability to delay gratification when it comes to buying things. Sociological reasoning, however, might focus on the impact of cultural norms that promote a lifestyle beyond most people's means, or on the changing economy that requires more Americans to rely on credit cards because their wages have not kept up with inflation.

sociological imagination a quality of the mind that allows us to understand the relationship between our particular situation in life and what is happening at a social level



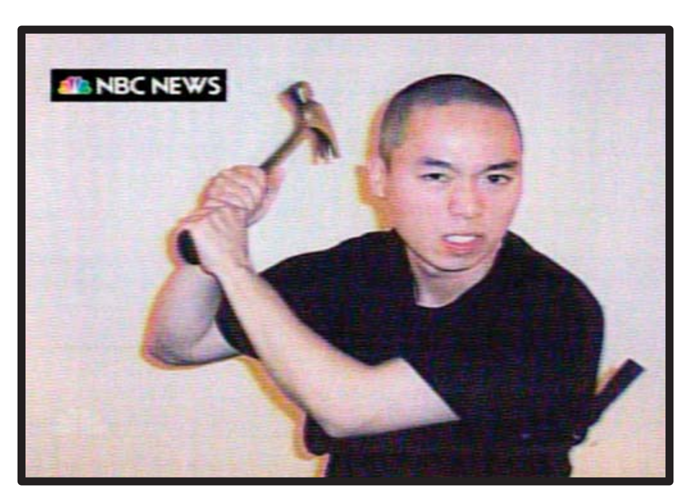
C. Wright Mills (1916–1962)

The sociological imagination requires that we search for the link between the micro and macro levels of analysis. We must look for how larger social forces such as race, class, gender, religion, economics, or politics are involved in creating the context of a person's life. Also, Mills's characterization of sociology as the intersection between biography and history reminds us that the process works in both directions: while larger social forces influence individual lives, there are many ways in which our individual lives can affect society as well. The sociological imagination thus helps us to better understand society, other people, and ourselves.

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS One of the most important things a sociological imagination can do for us is give us a way of looking at the world beyond our own immediate personal experience. It can take us into different worlds, to discover other people who may have radically different ways of experiencing life and interpreting reality. The sociological imagination helps us appreciate different viewpoints and understand how they may have come about. In turn, it helps us to understand better how we developed our own values, beliefs, and attitudes.

How might we apply the sociological imagination to a particular type of event? Let's take as our example the disturbing phenomenon of school shootings. They seem to have become more common in recent years, with the worst incident being the killing of 32 people at Virginia Tech (VT) on April 17, 2007, and more recently the February 14, 2008, shootings at Northern Illinois University (NIU), which left 5 students dead.

Most of us are familiar with the facts: Cho Seung-Hui was a 23-year-old English major at Virginia Tech. Using two handguns that he had purchased, he murdered 2 people at a dorm and 30 people in an academic building before killing himself (CNN 2007). Less than a year later Steven Kazmierczak walked into a classroom at Northern Illinois University with a shotgun in his guitar case and three more guns hidden under his jacket. He wounded 22 people and killed 5 before ending his own life (Bourdreau and Zamost 2008). Most of



Cho Seung-Hui An image that NBC News received from Cho Seung-Hui, the gunman who murdered 32 people at Virginia Tech in 2007.

us were shocked and appalled by these tragedies and left to ask ourselves how they could have happened. Each time we waited to hear more details, to get some kind of explanation. Much of the information centered on the young men themselves. Both struggled with mental illness. Cho had been ordered to seek psychiatric treatment by a Virginia judge and Kazmierczak had been hospitalized for mental illness in the past. They also were both described as men who were quiet and not very outgoing. However, they were different in many ways. Cho mailed a video manifesto to NBC News, while Kazmierczak deliberately destroyed any materials that might have provided a hint or explanation about the violence he planned to commit. Cho was a loner who referred to himself as a "question mark" and wrote menacing plays for his creative writing class. Kazmierczak was a successful student who wrote about his commitment to helping others. Given their biographies, people want to assume that Cho and Kazmierczak were sick, twisted individuals, intent on destruction, who eventually went on a killing rampage. But questions about why continue to nag us.

The sociological perspective suggests that we look at Cho and Kazmierczak as individuals who were shaped by their social circumstances. This does *not* mean that we wish to relieve them of responsibility for their actions. But there are other factors to consider. The two men lived in a particular time and place, within a cultural and historical context, all of which helped create an environment in which this tragedy happened. They were products of family structure and child-rearing practices common to the late twentieth century. They were average in many ways, with the same kinds of interests and background that a lot of other college students have. In part that meant that they were having trouble with adolescence: they felt shy and awkward, alienated and ostracized, and were bullied by other teenagers in high school. They were exposed to a great deal of violence in the form of entertainment, from movies to video games to the nightly news. Guns were readily available to them, both at home and through friends and gun dealers. Cho and Kazmierczak responded to their environment, and their own internal impulses, by becoming outcasts and rebels.

That all of this erupted into a homicidal and suicidal rage is not unique to them. There have been other school shootings, as well as lesser incidents of hostility, which would indicate that these are not isolated events. Perhaps it is just another example of a more widespread trend toward youthful despair and violence in our society.

What is important to remember is that the sociological perspective does not deny individual responsibility; it does not offer a rationalization or justification. What it does do is give us a broader context for understanding people and situations.

Culture Shock

Many of us may naturally be inclined toward thinking sociologically. In his book *Invitation to Sociology* (1963), Peter Berger describes what kind of person it takes to become a sociologist: someone with a passionate interest in the world of human affairs, someone who is intense, curious, and daring in the pursuit of knowledge. "People who like to avoid shocking discoveries . . . should stay away from sociology," he warns (p. 24). The sociologist will care about the issues of ultimate importance to humanity, as well as the most mundane occurrences of everyday existence. This impulse will lead her to investigate every walk of life, from the sacred to the profane, the popular to the obscure, the fascinating to the commonplace. From the sociological perspective, she will glimpse the richness and variety of human experience.

One way to gain a sociological perspective is to attempt to create in ourselves a sense of **culture shock**. Anthropologists use the term to describe the experience of visiting an exotic foreign culture. The first encounters with the local natives and their way of life can seem so strange to us that they produce a kind of disorientation and doubt about our ability to make sense of things. Putting all judgment aside for the moment, this state of mind can be very useful. For it is at this point, when we so completely lack an understanding of our surroundings, that we are truly able to perceive what is right in front of our eyes.

As sociologists we try to create this effect without necessarily displacing ourselves geographically: we become curious and eager visitors to

culture shock a sense of disorientation that occurs when you enter a radically new social or cultural environment



Kiva.org and Microloans

When you picture the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize it's probably a diplomat or world leader you have in mind, not a banker or an economist, but in 2006 that's exactly who the Nobel Committee selected. Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank, which he founded, were awarded the prize for their "efforts to create economic and social development from below" by making microcredit available to people who couldn't hope to receive a loan from a traditional bank or financial institution (Nobel Foundation 2006).

The roots of the Grameen Bank stretch back several decades, to when Yunus, then a professor of economics at the Chittagong University in Bangladesh, made a personal loan of $27 to a number of poor people in a nearby village. He quickly realized that such a gesture benefited not only the borrowers but also the community and himself. After failing to convince local banks to make credit available to more of the area's poor, he founded the Grameen Bank in 1983. Unlike traditional banks its express mission was to make loans to the poor. Since then literally hundreds of similar new organizations have sprung up to provide microcredit for entrepreneurs in the developing world.

One of the most exciting new organizations is Kiva, from the Swahili for "unity," founded in 2005 by Matthew and Jessica Flannery. Jessica heard Muhammad Yunus speak at Stanford and decided that her career needed to involve microfinance. She and her husband then visited Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda while working for another microfinance institution, the Village Enterprise Fund (VEF). They saw the power of microfinance to change lives but also the limitations of using local banks as a source of capital. The Grameen Bank had become mostly self-sustaining, but many other smaller microfinance organizations still borrowed money from local banks, and the relatively high interest rates and fees meant that borrowers were still paying an average interest rate of 35 percent on their microloan (Narang 2006). Matthew and Jessica felt that the interest charged by banks to microfinance institutions can make it more difficult for microfinance institutions to become self-sustainable.

Kiva's solution was to create an organization that looked more like a social networking website than a bank. Unlike other microfinance groups, Kiva.org is a person-to-person microlending website, which allows lenders to select the particular project they want to fund by looking at profiles posted to the site. Once an individual has selected a project they can loan as little as $25 or as much as the borrower has requested. Most loans are made by a variety of individuals, each investing a part of the total sum. For example, at this particular moment Muhammad Hanif, a farmer and teacher in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, is seeking about a thousand dollars to buy livestock, and Chin Seun, a widow in Cambodia is trying to borrow $300 to hire a tractor to plow her farmland.

Kiva works by finding local partners who identify and vet potential loan candidates. Their first seven loans all went to start businesses in Tororo, Uganda, and the borrowers were screened by the VEF and a man named Moses Onyango, whom they had met while visiting East Africa. Since then Kiva has partnered with more than 100 institutions all over the world, but the biggest challenge is matching the growth of our lending opportunities with the funds that lenders want to lend. After the website was featured on Oprah, Kiva was forced to change (temporarily) from a minimum loan of $25 to a fixed loan of $25 just to accommodate all the people who wanted to invest.

Within a year of going online, Matthew Flannery had quit his job at TiVo to devote himself full-time to Kiva. As of August 2008 they have facilitated more than 270,000 lenders in loaning over $37 millions dollars to more than 40,000 borrowers in 42 different countries (Kiva). The overall default rate is a tiny 1.47 percent. Microcredit is somewhat like those traditional charities that allow Americans to sponsor children in the developing world and whose only pay-off is emotional, but there are several important differences. First,

digital cameras and the internet allow lenders to easily track the projects in which they have invested. Second, the money is a loan, and almost all the loans are paid back. After a loan is repaid lenders are free to do whatever they want with their money, but many lenders choose to reinvest it with a new entrepreneur.

One of the most popular features of the Kiva.org website is the journal feature, posting entries kept by the entrepreneurs who have borrowed money. Kiva is unique among all such organizations in the way it combines microlending with an online community. Way back in 2005 founder Matthew Flannery posted a blog entry explaining that "one of the main reasons I started Kiva" was that "I love the stories and I desire the information" (Flannery 2008). The emotional gratification that comes from seeing exactly how an individual donation makes a difference is what makes investing this way so attractive, but it also serves as a potent reminder of how individual action can change the world, one loan at a time. What is important about Kiva.org, and what is of interest from a sociological perspective, is the fact that it allows individuals to take action. When thousands of individuals help a little, large-scale change can happen.



Microloans Make a Difference Manuel Acevedo (on the right) loaned money through Kiva.org to Mirtha Ortega (middle) and her daughter Mirella (left) in Peru. When they met in Lima, Mirtha described how the loan from Manuel, her "guardian angel," transformed her family's life.



Culture Shock In the television show *Lost*, six of the characters return from a deserted island to discover that ordinary experiences that they previously took for granted seem strikingly different or unfamiliar.

our own lives. We often find that what is familiar to us, if seen as if from an outsider's perspective, is just as exotic as some foreign culture, only we've forgotten this is true because it's our own and we know it so well. To better understand this state of mind, you might imagine what it would be like to return home from a desert island. For example, consider how the characters in the television series *Lost* dealt with returning home in the fourth season (2008) of the show. As castaways from a plane wreck, they all had to learn to survive the extraordinary conditions on a desert island. After living there for many months, they felt a sense of culture shock when they returned to civilization. Although life back home was instantly familiar, it also seemed strikingly new. In fact, some among the group (referred to as the "Oceanic Six"), including Dr. Jack Shephard and Hugo "Hurley" Reyes, encountered exceptional difficulties adjusting to the life they had known before the island. Of course you don't need to be shipwrecked to see your own everyday life in a new way.

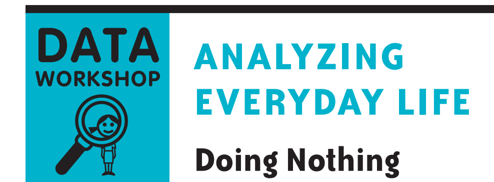
beginner's mind approaching the world without preconceptions in order to see things in a new way

Beginner's Mind

Another possible way of gaining a sociological perspective comes from Bernard McGrane (1994), who promotes a kind of shift in thinking that's borrowed from the Zen Buddhist tradition. McGrane suggests that we practice what is called **beginner's mind**—the opposite of expert's mind, which is so filled with facts, projections, assumptions, opinions, and explanations that it can't learn anything new. If we would like to better understand the world around us, then we must defamiliarize ourselves with it, or unlearn what we already know. Beginner's mind approaches the world without knowing in advance what it will find; it is open and receptive to experience.

Perhaps our greatest obstacle to making new discoveries is precisely our old ideas, or our habitual ways of thinking. "Discovery," McGrane says, "is not the seeing of a new thing—but rather a new way of seeing things" (1994, p. 3). One way to achieve this kind of awareness is to practice being present in the moment. Even when we think we are present, we are all too often preoccupied with thoughts and feelings

that prevent us from fully participating in reality and that take us out of the now. If we can find some inner stillness, according to McGrane, if we can stop our normal mental chatter, then there is a possibility for true learning to occur. It is in this space that a personal "paradigm shift" (a new model for understanding self and society) can take place.



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Doing Nothing

Bernard McGrane suggests that we actually "do" rather than just study sociology. His book *The Un-TV and the 10 MPH Car* (1994) features exercises designed to help students experience the micro level of society. This Data Workshop is an adaptation of one of his experiments.

Step 1: Conducting the Experiment
This exercise requires that you go to a relatively busy public space (a mall, square, plaza, street corner, park, sidewalk, etc.) and literally do nothing for 10 minutes. That means just stand there and be unoccupied. Don't be waiting for someone, taking a break, sightseeing, or otherwise engaged in a normal kind of activity. Also don't daydream, fantasize, or think about the past or the future; don't entertain yourself with plans or internal dialogues. Don't whistle, hum, fidget, look in your purse, play with your keys, take notes, or anything else that might distract you from just being there and doing nothing. Do, however, observe the reactions of others to you, and pay attention to your own thoughts and feelings during these 10 minutes.

Step 2: Thinking and Writing About the Experience
After conducting the experiment, write a journal entry (casual in tone and written in the first person) describing the experience and its meaning to you. Describe other people's reactions and your own thoughts in as much detail as possible.

The purpose of this exercise is to get you to see that changing your perspective (from "doing something" to "doing nothing") makes everything different. It helps turn the ordinary world into a strange place. It makes you more aware of your own sense (or lack) of self and how identity is constructed in society. You can't take for granted that you "just know" what other people are doing or thinking or how the meaning of a situation is being defined or interpreted.



Doing Nothing How does standing in a crowded place and doing nothing change how you experience the ordinary world?

Divested of your usual perspective as an everyday actor, you'll learn how the most mundane activities (like just standing around) can become major objects of critical inquiry.

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Complete the exercise and bring your journal entry to class. Discuss your findings with other students in small groups.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Complete the exercise and write a one- to two-page essay describing your findings. You may want to include snippets of your journal entry to illustrate your points.

The most important thing for you to take away from an introductory sociology class is a sociological perspective—not just a storehouse of facts, which will inevitably fade over time. Sociology promises a new way of looking at and thinking about the social world, which can serve you in good stead no matter what you find yourself doing in the future.

Starting Your Sociological Journey

In this text we will apply our sociological imaginations to the most familiar aspects of our world: everyday life in

contemporary American society, including the mass media and popular culture.

Sociology and Everyday Life

We will focus on everyday life because you are already experienced at observing it closely. In fact, you already have many of the skills necessary to become an astute analyst of social life, but you take for granted your observations because you make them as an everyday actor. In this course you will acquire a new persona—that of social analyst. The two personas represent two different ways of looking at the same social world.

The **everyday actor** approaches his social world with what is referred to as "reciped," or practical, knowledge (Schutz 1962), which allows him to get along in his everyday world. However, practical knowledge is not necessarily as coherent, clear, and consistent as it could be. For example, you are no doubt skilled at using the telephone, an important tool in your everyday life. It brings you into daily contact with friends and family, puts you in touch with the pizza delivery guy, and allows you to register for classes and pick up your grades at the end of the term. But you probably can't explain how it works in a technical way. You know only how it works for you in a practical, everyday way. This is the important feature of the everyday actor's knowledge: it is practical, not scientific (Table 1.1).

In order to acquire knowledge about the social world that is systematic, comprehensive, coherent, clear, and consistent, the social analyst has to approach that world differently from the everyday actor (even when they are two personas of the same individual). The social analyst has to "place in question everything that seems unquestionable" to the everyday actor (Schutz 1962, p. 96). In other words, the social analyst has to take the perspective of a stranger in the social world; she seeks out and tries to verify what the everyday actor might just accept as truth. For instance, people tend to believe that women are much more talkative than men. This might seem so evident, in fact, as to not be worth investigating. The social analyst, however, would not take such an assumption at face value, but *would* investigate and deliver a much more complex conclusion than you might think.

There are strengths and weaknesses to both approaches to everyday life: the analyst sees with clarity what the actor glosses over, but the actor understands implicitly what the analyst must labor to grasp. You'll be using your sociological imagination, along with the theories and methods you'll learn about in the upcoming chapters, to combine the virtues of both analyst and actor. The result will be a more profound and comprehensive understanding of the social world in which we all live.

everyday actor one who has the practical knowledge needed to get through daily life but not necessarily the scientific or technical knowledge of how things work

TABLE 1.1 Practical vs. Scientific Knowledge

Everyday actor: Practical knowledge	Social analyst: Scientific knowledge
partially coherent	completely coherent
sufficiently clear	excruciatingly clear
inconsistent	consistent
incomplete	complete

Contemporary American Society

In addition to looking at everyday life, this book will also focus on contemporary American society, though without neglecting comparative historical or global viewpoints. Let's address both the "contemporary" and "American" aspects of this proposition.

IN OUR TIME? One of the main reasons to focus on the contemporary period is that our present-day experience is the most immediate to us and will make for the most interesting study. One of sociology's greatest strengths is its ability to connect with our own lives, and this book is grounded in that kind of basic relevance. We believe that you will find this contemporary material more enjoyable. At the same time it is important to recognize that relevance is not incompatible with rigor. When sociology can resonate with students on a personal level, then it can begin to stimulate them on an intellectual level. Once you are drawn into the subject matter, you can be challenged to think more deeply and to extend those thoughts more broadly.

While our emphasis will remain on the present, it is likewise valuable to visit the past. We will use a comparative historical approach when appropriate to highlight the differences between one period and the next, and to show how society, and thus our lives in it, has changed or evolved over time—as in the following example.

Swiss sociologist Norbert Elias (1978) studied some of the most mundane aspects of everyday life, manners, from a historical perspective: which fork to use, how to greet your hostess, how to blow your nose in polite society, and so on. Elias scoured etiquette manuals published in Europe from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century, comparing the rules for everyday behavior, tracking how they

changed over time, and linking those changes to changes in the larger society. He noted that "the standard of what society demands and prohibits changes" as that society changes (p. xiii) and that the controls society places on individual behavior undergo historic transformations that mirror the transformations in the larger society. For example, a 1731 German etiquette manual called *The Gallant Ethic* sought to teach "refined acts" to young men aiming for "the special advantage and pleasure" of membership in "polite society." Its advice for those using public thoroughfares: "If you pass a person who is relieving himself, you should act as if you had not seen him, and so it is impolite to greet him" (Elias 1978, p. 133; Barth 1731, p. 288). What does this piece of advice tell us about life in the early eighteenth century? Mainly that natural functions such as urination were not necessarily carried out in private. The processes of historical transformation by which bodily functions were excluded from our social life were underway (indeed, the reader is instructed to avoid interrupting the person who is peeing in the street!), but they had yet to reach the state we now take for granted: that urination and excretion take place behind closed doors, with the help of specialized technologies that flush away the evidence. Elias's comparative historical research helps us see the importance of taking both a cross-cultural and a transhistorical perspective on social life: sometimes we will highlight a contemporary social issue by making comparisons with the past, and sometimes we will highlight a familiar cultural phenomenon by making comparisons with other cultures.



The Gallant Ethic Sociology can draw on comparative-historical sources, like this eighteenth-century advice guide, to study changes in everyday behaviors like manners and dining habits and other large-scale changes in society.

AMERICA AS A PLACE AND AN IDEAL What about the "American" aspect of our focus? To begin with, America is not merely a geographic location; it is both a real place and an ideal concept that serves to situate us within a meaningful cultural and historical context. As a nation *and* an ideal, America has long fascinated scholars from other countries. In 1831, for example, French attorney Alexis de Tocqueville journeyed to the United States with his colleague Gustave de Beaumont, intent on learning from the American experiment in democracy. They traveled, conducted interviews, and recorded their own observations on all aspects of American life and culture. Their plan was to use the United States as an example—in both the positive and the negative sense—so that French citizens, new to the concept of democracy themselves, could learn from the country's strengths and weaknesses. Tocqueville's resulting analysis of American culture and politics remains provocative and influential to this day (Tocqueville 1835/1994).

As with many foreign observers before and since, Tocqueville was both intrigued by and critical of the American way of life. He admired ideals like freedom, equality, individuality, tolerance, democracy, and enterprise; however, he disapproved of the way many of these ideals were put into practice. Tocqueville was extremely critical of slavery (indeed, his traveling companion, Gustave de Beaumont, wrote an antislavery novel, *Marie* [1958], inspired by his observations in America); he was troubled by the lack of universal suffrage, the exploitation of workers, the "tyranny of the majority," and the materialism and status-consciousness he witnessed. Nevertheless he predicted that the United States would become a world power and that others would seek guidance from its example.

Fast-forward to the 1990s, when yet another French observer analyzed both the allure and the danger of American culture. Jean Baudrillard, a postmodern theorist, dissects American cultural icons like Disneyland, Las Vegas, New York's Times Square, and Hollywood, intent on rooting out the destructive abyss beneath the attractive veneer of media images. Baudrillard's work is in some ways quite pessimistic.



Postmodern America In groundbreaking books like *Simulcra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard argues that Americans surround themselves with artificial, media-saturated environments that facilitate consumerism and make it difficult to identify what is real and what is not.

He implies that our current social arrangements are built on dangerous illusions and that we have lost the ability to distinguish between what is real and what is just a special effect, designed to keep us spinning in an endless cycle of material consumption and media hysteria. Despite his conclusions, Baudrillard just can't help himself—he is still drawn by America's allure, enough to continue examining the same cultural symbols and processes that he sees as our downfall. It is this fascination with American society, experienced by social analysts and critics from the Revolution to the Millennium, that we seek to capture in this text.

There are other important reasons to study American society as well. One is that the United States continues to be a prime example of what we might refer to as the "modern social experiment," something that both Tocqueville and Baudrillard recognized. It is a place where different ideas are born, old ways are discarded or reinterpreted, and innovation takes hold. New forms of social structure and interaction have long provided inspiration and challenges for the social sciences. At the same time the United States is plagued by many of the same social problems that are felt elsewhere, whether crime, poverty, or damage to the environment. In fact, we may even be creating social problems that have never existed before. America makes such a great social laboratory precisely because there is still so much to learn from it.

Part of what makes the country so interesting is its astonishing multiculturalism. Cities like New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, and Chicago have some of the most diverse populations on the planet, and even the smallest towns are experiencing population changes. In these cities we find different influences from around the world coming together in unprecedented ways. This mixture of cultures may represent the future of urban life, not only here but perhaps for the rest of the developing world as well. The dynamic nature of modern American cities can serve as a model for study in almost every conceivable realm of social life.

The United States in Global Perspective

We can all picture the United States as it is outlined on a map, but those geographic boundaries are not impermeable

barriers between us and the rest of the world. We are closely associated with our neighbors, near and far. As part of the New World, we sit between the Old World of Europe and the emerging worlds of the Pacific Rim and Latin America. Not every American thinks in terms of our membership in the global community, however. Some people are just not aware of our connection to other countries; others would prefer that we return to a time when we could claim more isolation from other parts of the world, though such a time may never really have existed; still others believe that America is so powerful that it doesn't need anyone else. But we are not immune from the rest of the world. America is an open society, which means that it is an active participant in a mutual, multidirectional flow of goods, services, information, ideas, and people across its borders.

On a macro level we only need to consider international diplomacy, treaties, trade agreements, currencies, and transnational corporations to understand how our fates and our fortunes are closely linked to those of the rest of the world. Furthermore, the future of the planet in terms of natural resources and the environment reminds us that we are inextricably linked to others. On a more micro level we are increasingly exposed to other cultures and ways of life, whether we travel or stay at home. For example, practicing yoga (India), going out for sushi (Japan), or listening to reggae music (Jamaica) can now be an everyday occurrence for many Americans. By the same token the impact of American culture—whether it's a medical breakthrough, a political cause, or a TV program like *Desperate Housewives*—is also felt almost worldwide.

Social theorist Marshall McLuhan, in his book *Understanding Media* (1964), proposed that information and communication were connecting the far reaches of the globe in unprecedented ways. McLuhan coined the term "global village" to describe how radio and television were creating new kinds of social bonds, bringing people together as if they all belonged to the same small tribe. He imagined that television would be like the campfire of primitive society, where people would sit around in the glow of its light, listening and watching as the same rituals of storytelling were shared by all.

The media *have* become truly global in nature, as anyone who watches CNN can readily attest. The audience for such programs as the World Cup soccer matches, the Olympic Games, or the Academy Awards can reportedly number in the billions. Live television coverage closes the gap of space and time, allowing us to feel as though we are a part of what is

happening even though we may be in our own living rooms, thousands of miles away.

Some aspects of McLuhan's optimistic vision for society may never come to pass, as conflicts continue to erupt worldwide. But his ideas regarding the potential of media technology are even more interesting now than they were when they were published, though they predated by several decades the development of the internet in the 1990s. We are all familiar with such terms as *cyberspace* and *virtual community*, which evoke anew the idea of a global village. In the Information Age we need to reconsider the idea of distance or the premise that people can share a sense of togetherness only when they also share a common geography. New media and computer networks can bring us into almost instantaneous contact with others, whether they are down the hall or across the globe.



Sociologists Think about America with a Global Perspective How have different cultures and ways of living from around the world become part of ordinary American life? What are examples of American culture reshaping behaviors in other countries? How have new forms of mass media created new global social bonds?

Global Perspective

Etiquette Across Cultures

We might not find it surprising that rules for proper etiquette have changed since the eighteenth century. But even in our own century, such rules are far from universal: behavior that might seem completely normal and appropriate in American society might be seen as terribly awkward or even offensive in another.

Norine Dresser (2005), a folklorist and award-winning columnist who studies multicultural manners, believes that understanding the variety of cultural practices found in different societies is becoming more important in this age of increasing globalization. She poses the following scenarios to introduce the kinds of quandaries that can arise when Americans interact with people from other cultures.

> Your friend's mother-in-law is visiting from Korea. When greeting her, do you bow, shake hands, or kiss her on both cheeks?
>
> The meeting with his international customers is going well for the corporate president—until he gives the thumbs-up sign. Why?
>
> You welcome your new neighbors with a bouquet of your prize-winning daffodils. Yet your beautiful yellow blossoms are met with looks of shock and horror. Why?

Let's look at each of these examples in turn. When establishing relations with people from most Asian cultures (including the Chinese and Japanese), one should avoid any body contact; therefore, bowing, nodding the head, or speaking is the best way to greet a visitor from Korea. When greeting people from South Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, or Thailand, it is appropriate to hold your hands together in front of your chin in a prayer-like position and then nod. Conversely, shying away from body contact gives off negative signals in Mediterranean countries such as France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal, where you are welcomed with a kiss on both cheeks. Latinos may also expect to be kissed or hugged, often with a simultaneous pat on the back.

When it comes to hand gestures, facial expressions, and body language, cross-cultural communication can sometimes be tricky. Take the thumbs-up sign, for instance. While in America this conveys something positive, in some other cultures the meaning is the same as giving the middle finger. In Middle Eastern countries, the thumbs-up is an obscene gesture, whereas in South Asia it has no meaning at all. The crooked index finger is another problematic gesture. While Americans might use it to signal someone to "come here," in Japan, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries it is an act of hostility or insolence. Facial expressions can be equally confusing. It would seem obvious to an American that a smile is a sign of friendliness or happiness. Yet in Japan, people also smile when they are sad, apologetic, angry, or confused. In Korea, a smile signals shallowness and thoughtlessness. When Puerto Ricans smile, it can mean "please," "thank you," "you're welcome," or "excuse me." To most Americans, shaking the head up and down means "yes," while side to side means "no." But try that in Albania or Bulgaria, and the meaning will be the exact opposite.

The rules of etiquette can become quite complex when it comes to giving flowers. Perhaps the neighbors in the example above were from Iran, where you would give yellow flowers only to an enemy or someone you hated. In Mexico and Peru, yellow flowers have a negative connotation associated with funerals. For the Chinese and other Asians, however, it is white flowers that symbolize mourning and death. By contrast, in America, white tends to signify purity and innocence. The color of roses is especially significant to Americans. Were you aware that red roses are for love and romance, yellow for joy and friendship, and pink for appreciation and thanks?

These examples highlight how easy it is to stumble into miscommunication with people from another culture. Cross-cultural comparisons are useful in helping us recognize the wide variety of customs and practices that are part of everyday life in different societies. We can better appreciate how we do things in the United States and the fact that our way of life is far from universal.



A Global Village In his groundbreaking book *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan imagined that mass media would become like the campfires of our ancestors, where people would sit, listen, and watch storytellers and perform rituals shared by all.



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Cyber Communities

This simple, observational Data Workshop will help you appreciate the diversity of virtual communities and become more aware of the way technology and mass media can bring people together and shape their relationships with each other.

Make a list of the top five things you like to do or that are most important in your life. This list could include your hobbies (like playing soccer or video games, reading mystery novels, or brewing your own beer), your membership in ethnic, religious, or even geographical groups (like being Jewish, Irish, or Texan), or other aspects of your life (like being a cancer survivor, building houses with Habitat for Humanity, or owning a golden retriever).

Now take your list and go online. Your goal: to find at least one cyber community for each of the items on your list, however obscure it may be (you may want to start with Google or Yahoo). Search for any type of newsgroup, bulletin board, or multiple-user domain that allows people to interact with each other. It shouldn't take long for you to find plenty of groups that match your own list of interests; in the process, you might be amazed how many other online communities there are.

For example, in searching the Yahoo group site for online communities of home brewers (there are 126), we were surprised to discover how many other beverages merited active online communities: for example there were 75 groups for winemakers, 50 groups for coffee drinkers, and 7 groups for people who really love green tea! It's astounding to see how many people the internet can bring together—people who might never have known one another had it not been for their shared interest *and* the world wide web. How many cyber communities could you join?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Complete your search of cyber communities and prepare some written notes that you can refer to in class. Discuss your findings with other students in small groups.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Complete your search of cyber communities and write a one-to-two-page essay describing your findings. You may want to include snippets of discussion from one of the groups to illustrate your points.

As citizens of this new world society, we are still making adjustments to the forces of globalization. Sometimes it takes an event like the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, for a whole new generation of Americans to be thrust into the global spotlight as never before. Those buildings in New York were, after all, called the World Trade Center, and they stood for America's engagement with the rest of the world.

The Mass Media and Popular Culture

How much time did you spend over the last few days watching TV, surfing the internet, or sending instant messages to your friends? What about listening to music—on your iPod, in the car, at work, at a party? Will you pick up a novel to read later, or maybe a newspaper or magazine? Have you seen any movies recently, either in the theater or on DVD? Have you noticed how advertisements seem to be popping



September 11, 2001, and Global Interdependence The World Trade Center buildings represented American global capitalism to many people in the United States and abroad. The destruction of the towers in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, reminded many Americans that we live in a world of complex global relationships.

up just about everywhere? Ever wonder why you're so familiar with so many brand-name products? When was the last time you went to McDonald's or Starbucks? What's the deal with all those logos on your clothes? Hey, is that your cell phone ringing?

If you're anything like the average person, you're completely immersed in mass media and popular culture. For most of us it would be impossible to imagine what life would be like without all these forms of modern technology and the seemingly infinite lifestyle choices they make available to us. But even though we're surrounded by mass media and popular culture, much like fish in water, we may not actually notice it. We want to study media and culture precisely because we're swimming in them. The point of sociology is to get us to see that.

First let's consider the terms themselves. *Mass media* is usually defined as those forms of communication that deliver a message from one sender to numerous receivers, for example from a television network to a large audience. New forms of interactive media, however, are blurring the lines between what we once considered mass communication and interpersonal communication: on the internet, for example, we can create as well as receive information. The term *popular culture* is also somewhat problematic. Depending on who is making the case, it can be alternately defined as culture of the people, culture that is well liked by many, folk or mass culture as opposed to high culture, culture with a commercial purpose, and so on.

We are now living at a fascinating and critical turning point in history. The importance of the mass media will only grow as the information revolution progresses. They may be the most central feature of postindustrial (or postmodern) society. Most of us are regular users of media hardware and software, even if we don't have much of a technical background. It doesn't take much know-how anymore to use a TiVo to record our favorite TV programs, and now we can even watch them on our iPods. Most of us have figured out how to take digital photos and can even post them to our personal web pages on Facebook. We can use computers for word processing, to play video games, and to send e-mail. We can download ringtones or music videos to our cell phones and send text messages to our friends sitting just a few rows away in the same classroom. More and more of us are being exposed to all kinds of new media technologies and consequently to their wide-ranging influence. On a social level the mass media intersect with every level of social structure and connect us to the global village. On a personal level they affect the way we think, feel, and interact and thus how we perceive the world around us.

Mass media and popular culture are so important that anyone who is interested in understanding society or themselves must consider both. The stated focus of this textbook, on everyday life and contemporary American society, can thus be refined to include mass media and popular culture, if for no other reason than that they are all inextricably linked.

Closing Comments

As everyday actors we're certainly fascinated by the everyday lives of other people. The new breed of reality TV programs, as well as news magazine shows like *Dateline* and *20/20* and talk shows like *Oprah*, *The View*, and *Live with Regis and*



Windows into Everyday Life Unlike reality television, which often sensationalizes ordinary life, sociology enables the scientific study of everyday life and social structures.

Kelly, give us glimpses, however artificial or prurient, into other lives. While this kind of fascination is understandable, it is neither systematic nor scientific.

A sociological perspective solves the problem of selective or sensationalistic inquiry into everyday experience. It allows us to see the connection between our individual experiences and the larger patterns and structures of our society, without necessarily focusing on individual pathologies or personal traumas. As social analysts we are fascinated by everyday life because its patterns and processes construct our social reality.

Sociology allows us to see our familiar world in a new way, and doing so means we may need to abandon, or at least reevaluate, our prior opinions about that world and our place in it. It is tempting to believe that our own opinions are widely held, that our way of seeing the world is the best, or at least the most common, way. Taking a sociological perspective forces us to see the fallacy in this way of thinking. Because other individuals are different from us—belonging to different social groups, participating in different social institutions, living in different cities or countries, listening to different songs, watching different TV programs, engaging in different religious practices—they may look at the world very differently than we do. But a sociological perspective also allows us to see the other side of this equation: in cases where we assume that others are different from us, we may be surprised to find that their approach to their everyday world is quite similar to ours. As Bernard McGrane says, "Sociology is both dangerous and liberating" (1994, p.10), as much because of what we learn about ourselves as because of what we learn about society.

This is the real world—the world that we all live in as individuals and that we create and construct collectively. There can be no better topic for us to study. Not only is sociology an absorbing subject, it is one whose study can yield rich personal rewards. The better we understand our society, the better we understand ourselves, and vice versa.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **What Sociologists Study** Society has a powerful influence on almost all aspects of our lives, but it doesn't come from outer space. It is produced every time people interact, and by studying those interactions, sociologists are studying the making of society.
- **What Is Sociology?** Sociology is not a collection of facts to be memorized, but a way of thinking about the world. C. Wright Mills called this the "sociological imagination," the quality of the mind that allows you to range from intimate and personal details of the individual to historical and structural details of a society and then to see the relationship between the two.

- **Levels of Analysis** Microsociologists tend to assume larger structures are formed through individual interactions, while macrosociologists are more likely to see those larger structures shaping relations between individuals. Likewise, quantitative and qualitative methods tend to produce different kinds of knowledge, and the everyday actor and the social analyst have different ways of looking at the same social world.

- **The Sociological Perspective** As everyday actors we already possess a wealth of knowledge about our social environment, but we have trouble seeing it. To study our own culture it's often helpful to try to artificially induce a state of mind that resembles culture shock. For instance, Bernard McGrane suggests that we could adopt a "beginner's mind" and concentrate on seeing everything with fresh eyes and no assumptions about how things are supposed to work.

- **Contemporary American Society and a Global Perspective** America and its mass media, military, and economy continue to exert a powerful influence on the globe. Changes in communications technology have led to what Marshall McLuhan calls a "global village," where the free flow of information readily connects people from every corner of the earth.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. How does the level of analysis you adopt affect your assumptions about how society works? Could Pam Fishman have done her research from a macro perspective? Perhaps with a survey? Would this have changed her conclusions?
2. Pay attention to your own conversations and note who asks more questions. Is it usually the party with less power? Explain how this sort of work is microsociology.
3. What does it mean to possess a sociological imagination? Think of your favorite food. What historical events had to happen and what institutions have to function in order for this food to be available? What sort of meanings does it have?
4. What does C. Wright Mills mean when he describes sociology as the "intersection of biography and history"? What is the relationship between personal life and larger social structures described here? Are personal lives determined by social structures?
5. What do anthropologists mean by *culture shock*? How could culture shock help you be a better sociologist? Think about the last time you returned home from a long trip. Did ordinary, everyday things seem strange or unfamiliar?
6. Beginner's mind requires us to unlearn what we already know and approach things with fresh eyes. How do breaching experiments such as the Doing Nothing exercise (p. 21) help you achieve this vantage point?
7. As an everyday actor, you possess a wealth of practical (but inconsistent) knowledge about your particular social world. Are there any areas of life in which you possess scientific knowledge that is completely coherent and excruciatingly clear? If so, how does this knowledge change the way you approach things?
8. Why do we need to study America in a global perspective? Make a list of all the commodities you will use in a given day—how many of them are made in America?
9. What did Marshall McLuhan mean by "global village"? Did he see this as a positive or negative phenomenon? What would the benefits be? Can you imagine any negative side effects to communication technology bringing people in distant parts of the world together?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Dress to Kill. 2002. Dir. Lawrence Jordan. WEA Corporation. British-born comedian Eddie Izzard points out things about American life we take for granted.

Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. Explores the way that changes in information and communication technology have made the world a smaller place and created connections between America and the rest of the world.

Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participating Culture*. London: Routledge. Describes how technological advances are blurring the lines between those who consume media and those who produce it.

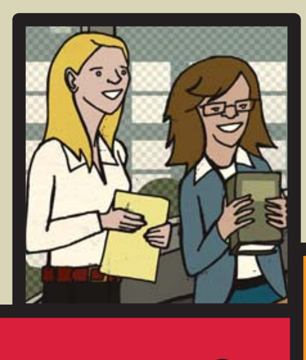
Klein, Naomi. 2000. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador. Argues that the American economy is now more directed at producing images than things.

Mintz, Sidney. 1997. *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Power, and the Past*. Boston: Beacon Press. Takes seriously the idea that we are what we eat and examines the social meanings behind a variety of food.

Romero, Mary. 2002. *Maid in the USA* (10th Anniversary Ed.). London: Routledge. This classic study of domestic servants was informed by the author's own childhood experiences accompanying her mother to similar jobs.

Spiegelman, Art. 2004. *In the Shadow of No Towers*. New York: Pantheon. A graphic novel that helps us understand why we should study America in a global context.

World Trade Center. 2006. Dir. Oliver Stone. Paramount. This film is the true story of two Port Authority police officers who responded to the terrorist attacks in New York City on 9/11. Makes you think about the way an event like 9/11 reveals America's connections to the rest of the world, in ways that can be both beneficial and terribly destructive.



CHAPTER 2

Sociology's Family Tree: Theories and Theorists

The following poem, based on a well-known parable from India, was written by American poet John Godfrey Saxe (1816–87). Perhaps you are already familiar with it, or at least with its appreciable wisdom.

THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he;
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

Moral:

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

SocIndex

Then and Now

1837: Harriet Martineau publishes *Society in America* and becomes the first female sociologist

2006: According to the American Sociological Association, 64% of the PhDs in sociology are earned by women

Here and There

United States: There are no public statues of Karl Marx in any city

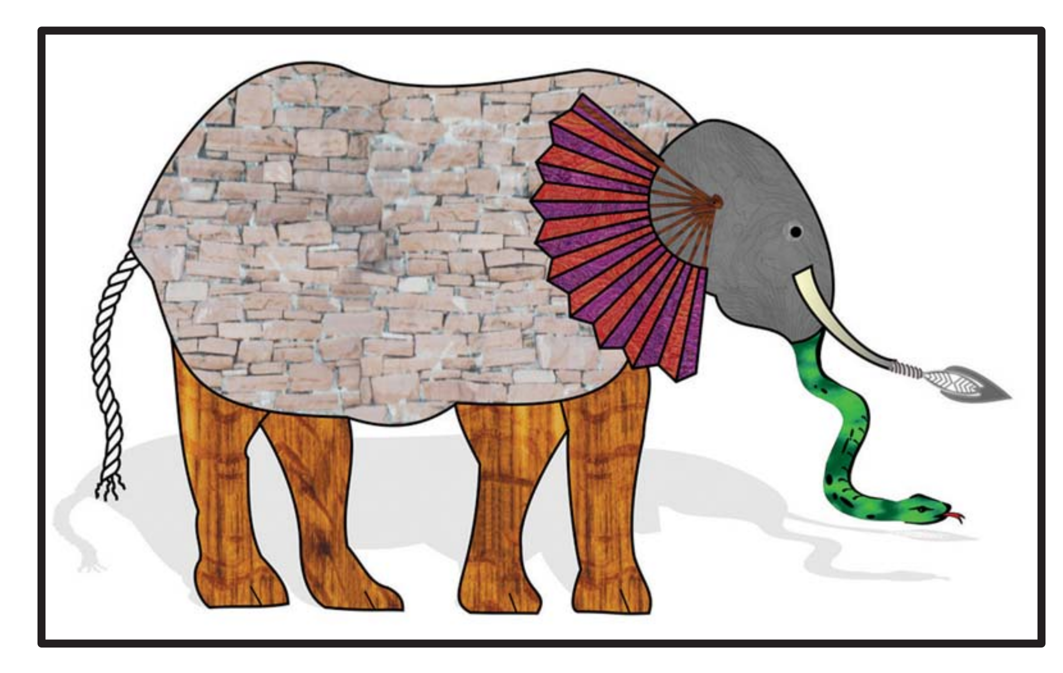
Berlin, Budapest, Moscow: Statues of Karl Marx are displayed in public plazas and parks in cities such as these around the world

This and That

In a playful reference to the movie's plot, the producers of *The Matrix* use a box made from the book *Simulacra and Simulation*, by postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard, as a hiding place for the main character's illegal software

British media theorist (and creator of Theory.org.uk) David Gauntlett creates trading cards and Lego sets that feature theorists like Anthony Giddens, bell hooks, and Erving Goffman

Although some sociologists wouldn't take kindly to the comparison, this poem could well be about us. We are often like blind men and women ourselves, groping around a giant beast, all trying to figure out just exactly what it looks like. That beast, of course, would be society.



The Blind Men and the Elephant Like the people in Saxe's poem, sociologists bring different perspectives to the study of society. How do the social contexts of different social theorists shape their views of society?

Since we can't observe something as large and complex as society in its entirety, we must resign ourselves to examining its various parts. Depending on how we approach society, we are likely to make different types of discoveries and come to different conclusions about the nature of the beast. Ideally, grasping the various parts we encounter and recognizing how they might be related to the other parts we know about should lead us to a greater understanding of the whole. In fact, the field of sociology has developed in much that way.

As sociologists we tend to develop certain preferences for looking at the world in a particular way. This is partly the result of our specialized training. We are exposed to different schools of thought depending on when, where, and with whom we study. We may have had other philosophical or intellectual influences as well. But we may also form our preferences simply because some perspectives just resonate with our own background and life experience. They may seem more natural, more relevant, or more reasonable to us than any other way of seeing things. In the poem each man grabs a different part of the animal and is convinced that he knows what the whole elephant looks like. Each in his own way is right and thinks the others are wrong. Sociology too can be fraught with contention. Within the discipline there are many ways of looking at social life, each different though not necessarily right or wrong, better or worse. These different perspectives may be complementary or contradictory, but they all have the potential to tell us something about what we are trying to understand.

That is the purpose of sociological theory—to help understand the world around us. In this chapter, we will look at the development of sociological theory over time and explore the ways that all important theories arise out of specific historical circumstances. We will also consider the ways that each theorist's personal experiences shape his or her interests, abilities, and opportunities, and hence his or her social theories as well.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter we are telling a story about the theoretical and historical development of the discipline of sociology. We want you to see how the ideas that shape sociology are linked to each other; we also want to introduce you to the men and women who came up with these ideas. Too often we don't think of these theorists as real people but treat them as talking heads, icons of social theory with neither life-altering calamities nor shifting professional fortunes. We want to overcome that deficit. We believe that our individual experiences and historical contexts shape our thoughts and the professional worlds in which we become members. This is as true for Karl Marx as it is for Kerry Ferris, as true for Jane Addams as it is for Jill Stein. It's true for all of us: you too will have ideas and do work that are shaped by your own experiences and your cultural and historical contexts. In fact, maybe someday someone will be writing a chapter about you!

So here's what we want you to get out of this chapter. First, a sense of the historical development of sociological theories. Second, a sense of the ongoing dialogue between theorists and the ways in which sociological thought has been and continues to be influenced by other disciplines in the social sciences, the physical and life sciences, and the humanities. Third, a sense that the lives of the theorists are linked to their theories, that their concrete experiences influenced their abstract thoughts. Bringing together the insights of these theorists may be your greatest challenge this term. So let's get started.

What Is Theory?

Great thinkers have been trying to understand the world and our place in it since the beginning of time. Some have done this by developing **theories**: abstract propositions about how things are as well as how they should be. Sometimes we also refer to theories as *approaches*, *schools of thought*, *paradigms*, or *perspectives*. Social theories, then, are guiding principles or abstract models that attempt to explain and predict the social world.

As an example, take a topic many social scientists are interested in: mental illness. Over the course of history and in different societies, theories of the causes of mental illness have varied widely. Each new theory led to a different type of treatment (and justification for that treatment); some of these seem shockingly inhuman to us now. For example, in fourteenth-century London, Bethlem Royal Hospital (which is still in operation today) became a kind of prison for those suffering from mental illnesses. Based on the theory that mental illness was a moral failing caused by demon possession or individual weakness, the "treatment" for those who suffered was their removal from society. Bethlem, or Bedlam as it came to be known, warehoused the mentally ill under the most horrifying of conditions, which included overcrowding, lack of food, water, and sanitation, whippings, and "exorcisms."

theories in sociology, abstract propositions that explain the social world and make predictions about future events

In Colonial America the prevailing theory was that mental illness was caused by the astrological position of the moon at the time of the individual's birth; hence the term "lunatic." According to this theory mental illness was located inside a lunatic's body, and the only possible cures involved treatments meant to release the illness, such as bleeding (which often killed the patients) and long-term induced vomiting (also potentially fatal). In the 1930s, the cause of mental illness was believed to be located in a particular portion of the brain, whose removal would thus provide the cure. The lobotomy, in which a bit of the brain (or lobe) was surgically removed, often without anesthesia, seemed to work nicely; patients became calm enough to leave the hospital and return home. We now know that lobotomies merely disconnected two critical parts of the brain from one another, leaving patients unable to feel emotions or act on the information provided to them by their senses.[1]

These approaches to mental illness now seem ridiculous and cruel. We know that mental illness is not caused by demon possession, a weak will, or astrological accidents, and we know that beatings, exorcisms, and lobotomies cannot restore mental health. We are certain (aren't we?) that mental illness is caused by problems of brain chemistry and that proper treatment involves medicines that restore that chemistry to its healthy balance. But given the history of changing theories and treatments, we have to ask: What makes this theory any better than the others? How can we be sure that this time we've gotten it right? Isn't it possible that, a hundred years from now, we'll discover the "real" cause of mental illness and that drug treatments will seem as useless and inhuman as surgeries and bleedings do now?

Theories, therefore, are sometimes off the mark, and every theory, no matter how accurate it seems, is always

[1] One of the pioneers of surgical lobotomy, Nobel Prize winner Antonio Egas Moniz, was permanently paralyzed after being shot in the spine by one of his former patients. It seems that this particular operation was unsuccessful.

positivism the theory, developed by Auguste Comte, that sense perceptions are the only valid source of knowledge

scientific method a procedure for acquiring knowledge that emphasizes collecting concrete data through observation and experiment

subject to modification. In fact this is the one reliable constant in the area of social theory: theories will change over time. Why? Because society itself changes over time, and theories seek to explain society in periods of both order and change. While every theorist hopes his or her ideas will have broad, enduring explanatory power, social change makes theoretical change a continual necessity.

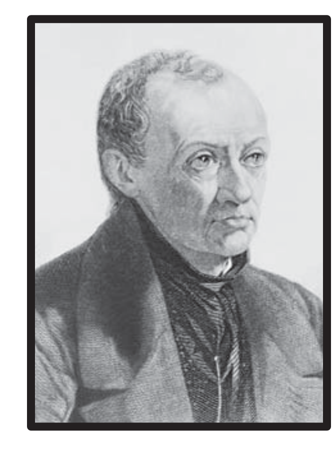
Sociology's Family Tree

Consider this chapter a kind of "family tree" of sociology. First, we will examine sociology's early historical roots. Then, as we follow the growth of the discipline, we will identify its major theoretical branches and trace the relationships between each offshoot and the other "limbs" that make up the entire family tree. We will link modern schools of sociological thought to their classical roots and, finally, examine the newest theoretical approaches and consider the future of sociological theory.

Sociology's Roots

The earliest social theorists focused on establishing society as an object of scientific scrutiny, which was itself a revolutionary concept. None of these early theorists were themselves sociologists (since the discipline didn't yet exist) but rather people from a variety of backgrounds—philosophers, theologians, economists, historians—who were trying to look at society in a new way. In doing so they laid the groundwork not only for the discipline as a whole but also for the different schools of thought that are still shaping sociology today.

AUGUSTE COMTE (1798–1857) Auguste Comte was the first thinker to provide a program for the scientific study of society, or a "social physics," as he first labeled it. Comte, a French scientist, developed a theory of the progress of human thinking from its early theological and metaphysical stages toward a final "positive," or scientific, stage. (**Positivism** seeks to identify laws that describe the *behavior* of a particular reality, like the laws of mathematics and physics, rather than its ultimate cause or essence, as religion does.) Having grown up in the aftermath of the French Revolution (1789) and its lingering political instability, Comte felt that society needed a similar kind of positivist guidance toward both social progress and social order. After studying at the French equivalent of an elite science and technology college, where he was introduced to the newly discovered **scientific method** (see Chapter 3), he began to imagine a way of applying the scientific method to social affairs. His ideas, featured in the book *Introduction to Positive Philosophy* (1842/1988), became the foundation of a scientific discipline that would describe the laws of social phenomena and help control social life: "sociology."



Auguste Comte

Although Comte is remembered today for little more than coining the term, he did play a significant role in the development of the discipline. His efforts to distinguish appropriate methods and topics for sociologists provided the kernel of a discipline that could grow. Other social thinkers advanced his work: Harriet Martineau and Herbert Spencer in England and Emile Durkheim in France.

HARRIET MARTINEAU (1802–76) Harriet Martineau was born in England and brought up by progressive parents who made sure their daughter was well educated. She became a journalist and political economist, proclaiming views that were radical for her time: for example, she supported labor unions, the abolition of slavery, and women's suffrage. Though Martineau never married, she preferred to be addressed as "Mrs.," not because she wished for a husband (indeed, she strongly rejected marriage as a tool for the subjugation of women) but because she recognized that the title conveyed respect and status in her culture. She felt she deserved that respect but that it was denied to her as a single woman.

In 1835 "Mrs." Martineau traveled to the United States and sought to judge this experiment in democracy on its own terms rather than by European standards. But she was disappointed with what she found there: the American experiment was, in her eyes,



Harriet Martineau



FIGURE 2.1 **Sociology's Family Tree**

Global Perspective

Eurocentrism and Sociological Theory

You might get the impression from this chapter that the major sociological theorists were all either European or American. In fact, some central sociological ideas were proposed in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East centuries before Marx, Weber, and Durkheim were even born, but we give these Western thinkers all the credit. Why?

Both the social world and social theory are often **Eurocentric**: they tend to privilege Europe and the West over other cultures. This means that hierarchies of global power, in which world superpowers like the United States and former colonial rulers like Britain and France dominate, are replicated in academic disciplines like sociology. Scholars who work against inequality and exploitation should note this distressing irony.

One influential non-Western thinker was Ibn Khaldun, an Arab Muslim philosopher and politician who lived in North Africa in the fourteenth century. His coining of the term *as sabiyah*, or "social cohesion," precedes Durkheim's work on the same subject by over 500 years, and his argument that larger social and historical forces shape individual lives predates Mills's insight about sociology as "the intersection of biography and history" by almost 600 years! Yet he is rarely given credit for proposing sociology as a discipline—*ilm alumran*, he called it, or "the science of civilization." This honor is reserved for French scholar Auguste Comte, working centuries later in the West.

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406)

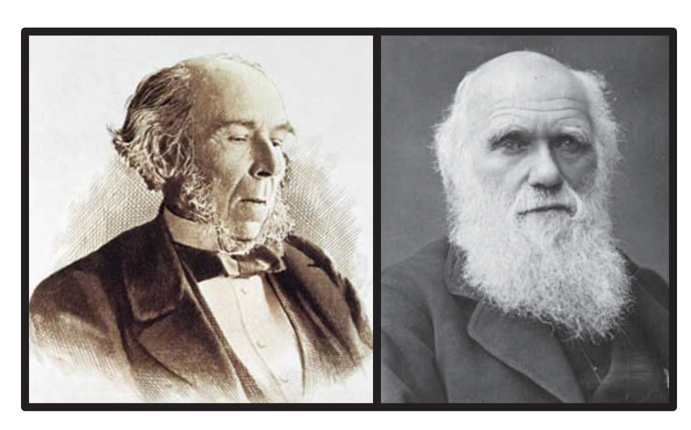
Also overlooked in conventional histories of sociology are Indian scholar Benoy Sarkar (1887–1949), Filipino activist and poet José Rizal (1861–1896), and Japanese folklorist Kunio Yanagita (1875–1962)—all of whom applied sociological insights to the problems of their nations. Sarkar explored India's religious divisions, Rizal analyzed the Philippines' fight for independence from Spain, and Yanagita used qualitative methods to explore Japan's culture and its long-standing isolationism. They have received virtually no notice for their achievements outside their own countries (Alatas and Sinha 2001).

Filipino sociologist Clarence Batan (2004) argues that Western theorists like Marx, Weber, and Durkheim may inspire non-Western scholars but that their theories arose in response to specific social problems that were particular to Western societies. Non-Western societies face different issues, including the legacy of colonialism imposed by the very Western countries from which those classical sociological theories sprang. Batan calls for sociologists in non-Western countries to respond to the needs of their societies by developing new theoretical frameworks that take postcolonial realities into account. Batan himself, along with other contemporary non-Western sociologists, works toward this goal every day in his research and teaching. Shouldn't your sociology professors do the same?

flawed and hypocritical. By condoning slavery and denying full citizenship rights to women and blacks, the United States wasn't living up to its own ideals, Martineau concluded. She wrote two books describing her observations—*Society in America* (1837) and *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838), both critical of American leadership and culture. By holding the United States to its own publicly stated democratic standards, rather than seeing the country from an ethnocentric British perspective, she was a precursor to the naturalistic sociologists who would follow her (for example, members of the Chicago School, whom we will encounter later). In 1853 Martineau made perhaps her most important contribution to sociology as a discipline: she translated Comte's *Introduction to Positive Philosophy* into English, thus making his ideas accessible in England and America.

Eurocentrism the tendency to favor European or Western history, culture, and values over other histories, cultures, and values

HERBERT SPENCER (1820–1903) Herbert Spencer was the first great English-speaking sociologist. His work was primarily responsible for the establishment of sociology in Britain and America. Although Spencer did not receive academic training, he grew up in a highly individualistic



Herbert Spencer **Charles Darwin**

family and was encouraged to think and learn on his own. His interests as a young man leaned heavily toward physical science, and instead of attending college, he chose to become a railway engineer. When railway work dried up, Spencer turned to journalism and eventually gained a position with a major periodical in London. There he became acquainted with leading figures in English letters and science and began to publish his own thoughts in book form.

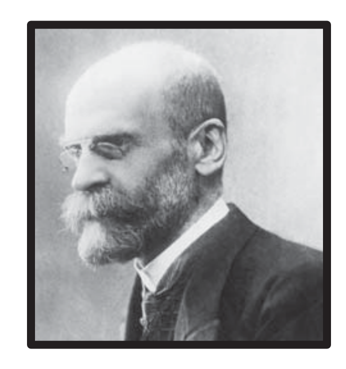
In 1862 Spencer drew up a list of what he called "first principles" (in a book by that name), and near the top of the list was the notion of evolution, driven by natural selection. Charles Darwin is the best-known proponent of such a theory, but the idea of evolution was in wide circulation even before Darwin made it famous. Spencer proposed that societies, like biological organisms, evolve through time by adapting to changing conditions, with less successful adaptations falling by the wayside. He coined the phrase "survival of the fittest," and his social philosophy is sometimes known as "social Darwinism." In the America of the late 1800s his ideas appealed to opponents of government intervention in social and economic affairs. But Spencer also suggested that we should understand a society's internal organization in terms of how it helps that society remain vital. Centralized governments, for example, function in the social body much as the central nervous system serves the human body.

In the late nineteenth century Spencer's work, including such books as *The Study of Sociology* (1873) and *The Principles of Sociology* (1897), was virtually synonymous with sociology in the English-speaking world. The scope and volume of his writing served to announce sociology as a serious discipline.

Classical Sociological Theory

While many sociological theories can trace their philosophical roots centuries into the past, the first real period of sociological theorizing occurred in the 1800s. This century is generally referred to as sociology's classical period for two reasons. First, it marks the beginning of sociology as a substantive discipline. Second, the work done in this period forms the theoretical foundations for all the sociological work that followed. European theorists such as Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber attempted to explain social order, social change, and social inequality—especially as they watched their world changing around them in the Industrial Revolution (the rapid transformation from agricultural to factory work in Europe and the United States)—and looked back at the changes wrought by the French and American Revolutions, each of which transformed monarchist rule into a democracy. Classical theory, then, is "classic" both on a historical timeline and in its pioneering of specifically sociological subject matter. In this section we will consider these three classical theorists and Sigmund Freud, whose theories provided a bridge between the classical and the contemporary.

EMILE DURKHEIM (1858–1917) Emile Durkheim devoted his life's work to establishing sociology as an important, independent discipline in the academic world. In his work, he demonstrated the effectiveness of using scientific (**empirical**) methods to study "social reality," essentially completing the project that his countryman Comte had anticipated half a century earlier.



Emile Durkheim

Durkheim's family life helped shape his career and interests as a sociologist. He was born into a close-knit and deeply religious Jewish family (his father was a rabbi) who instilled in him a strong sense of morality (not just as an abstract concept but as a concrete influence on social relations) and a strong work ethic. His family's example also encouraged him to found his own school of thought, as in the rabbinical tradition. Early on Durkheim was inspired by the political upheavals and suffering of his fellow citizens. After witnessing the ravages of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), he hoped that applied science could stabilize and revitalize France in the aftermath of its devastating defeat. He did not believe that traditional approaches based in abstract moral philosophy were effective enough to increase understanding and bring about social change, so he turned instead to the more promising, concrete science of sociology as represented in Comte's work.

empirical based on scientific experimentation or observation

mechanical solidarity term developed by Emile Durkheim to describe the type of social bonds present in premodern, agrarian societies, in which shared tradition and beliefs created a sense of social cohesion

organic solidarity term developed by Emile Durkheim to describe the type of social bonds present in modern societies, based on difference, interdependence, and individual rights

anomie "normlessness"; term used to describe the alienation and loss of purpose that result from weaker social bonds and an increased pace of change

solidarity the degree of integration or unity within a particular society; the extent to which individuals feel connected to other members of their group

communism a political system based on the collective ownership of the means of production; opposed to capitalism

conflict generated by the competition between different class groups for scarce resources and the source of all social change, according to Karl Marx

In his first major study, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), Durkheim expressed his belief that social bonds were present in all types of societies but that different types of societies created different types of bonds. He suggested that the **mechanical solidarity** experienced by people in an agrarian society bound them together on the basis of shared tradition and beliefs and similarities of experience. In industrial societies, on the other hand, where factory work was becoming increasingly specialized, **organic solidarity** prevailed: people's bonds with each other were based on the tasks they performed, interdependence, and individual rights. In both cases we are bound to each other—it is the qualities of the bonds that are different.

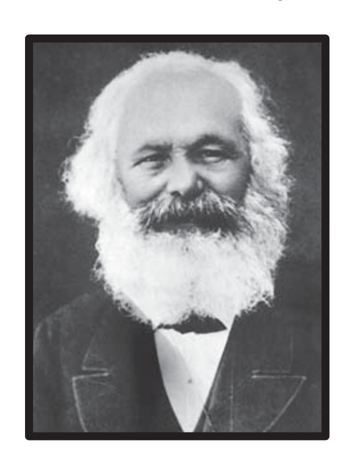
Durkheim believed that even the most individualistic of actions had sociological explanations and set out to establish a scientific methodology for studying these actions. He chose for his groundbreaking case study the most individualistic of actions, suicide, and used statistical data to show that suicides were related to social factors such as religious affiliation, marital status, and employment. Explaining a particular suicide by focusing exclusively on the victim's psychological makeup neglected the impact of social bonds. According to Durkheim in his now-classic study *Suicide* (1897/1951), even the darkest depression experienced by an individual had its roots in his connections to the social world—or rather his lack of connection. He theorized that suicide was one result of **anomie**, a sense of disconnection brought about by the changing conditions of modern life. The more firmly anchored a person was to family, religion, and the workplace, the less anomie he was likely to experience. In his final major study *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912/1995), Durkheim suggested that religion was a powerful source of social **solidarity**, or unity, because it reinforced collective bonds and shared moral values. However, since the power of the collective over the individual could also take secular forms—for example, the workplace, family, political groups, or schools—he recognized that traditional religious beliefs were not the only source of social stability.

Durkheim's project of establishing sociology in the academy was enormously successful. He became the first professor of social science in France at the University of Bordeaux in 1887 and later won a similar appointment at the Sorbonne in Paris, the very heart of French academic life. Today, Durkheim's eminence in the social sciences is as strong as ever. His work was a central inspiration for the "structural-functionalist" sociology that was dominant into the mid-twentieth century (see p. 44), and his ideas are still being adopted by contemporary theorists.

KARL MARX (1818–83) Karl Marx, a German social philosopher, cultural commentator, and political activist, has become well known to the world as the forebear of **communism**, the political system adopted by countries (such as the former Soviet Union and China) that were often seen as enemies of democracy and the United States.

This association has led many to believe that Marx was nothing more than a misguided agitator who helped cause more than a century of political turmoil. Sociologists, on the other hand, have found that Marx's theories continue to provide powerful tools for understanding social phenomena. His idea that **conflict** between social groups is central to the workings of society and the engine of social change is one of the most vital perspectives in sociology today.

Marx grew up in a modernizing, industrializing yet politically and religiously conservative monarchy; this, plus the fact that his was a restless, argumentative personality, accounts in great part for his social theory. Marx studied law and philosophy in Bonn and Berlin, receiving a PhD in 1841. By then he was associating with other left-wing thinkers and becoming increasingly politicized. His personal ties with other radicals effectively barred him from entering academia, so he turned to journalism, writing stories that often antagonized government censors and officials. After several moves around Europe, he found himself in 1848 in Belgium, where he became even more active in political organizing. By this time he had also developed the main tenets of his social theory.



Karl Marx

For most of his life Marx led an economically fragile existence. He managed to maintain a tenuous middle-

class lifestyle but only with financial support from his close friend and chief intellectual collaborator Friedrich Engels, who studied the conditions of the English working class. Marx's own circumstances may have sparked an interest in **social inequality**, or the uneven and often unfair distribution of resources (in this case, wealth) in society. Even so Marx never experienced firsthand the particular burdens and difficulties of the working class.

Marx lived during the Industrial Revolution, a time of rapid social change, when large numbers of people were moving from an agricultural way of life in rural areas to manufacturing jobs in urban areas. The revolution, with its technological advances and wage-based economy, promised to be an age of prosperity and abundance. But while it seemed to solve many problems, it was also creating new ones such as poverty, crime, and disease. Marx believed that most of those problems were a result of **capitalism**, the emerging economic system of that period, based on the private for-profit operation of industry. He proposed a radical alternative to the inherent inequalities of capitalism, which were outlined in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), perhaps his most famous book.

In industrial society Marx saw the forces of capitalism creating a class struggle between the "haves" and the "have-nots," or those who owned the **means of production** (anything that could create more wealth: money, property, factories, other types of businesses) and those who worked for them. He argued that the most important factor in social life was a person's relationship to the means of production, in other words, whether someone was a worker, and thus a member of the **proletariat**, or an owner, and thus a member of the **bourgeoisie**. Everything of value in society resulted from human labor, which was the proletariat's most valuable asset. Yet they suffered from what Marx called **alienation** because of the process of production and the fact that they were unable to directly benefit from the fruits of their own labor. Workers were paid wages, but it was the factory owners who grew rich as a result of their toil.

Marx noted that a small percentage of the population owned the means of production and were able to exploit the masses and thereby ensure even greater gains for themselves. These powerful few in the bourgeoisie not only possessed material wealth but also enjoyed privilege and power in society. They were able to protect their own interests, preserve their positions, and pass along their advantages to their heirs. The proletariat tended to be compliant to the existing social order and were often so absorbed in just trying to make a living that they were less apt to protest the same conditions that led to their oppression. But eventually, Marx believed, the oppression would become too much to bear, and the proletariat would rise up against the bourgeoisie, abolishing capitalism for good.

In 1849 Marx moved to London and withdrew from political activity in order to concentrate on writing *Das Kapital* (which was edited by Engels and published in 1890). The book, in several volumes, provided a thorough exposition of his program for social change, which later became the foundation of political systems such as communism and **socialism**. Marx intended it to be his main contribution to sociology, but later developments in the social sciences have placed more emphasis on his earlier writings.

Because Marx held such radical ideals, his thought was not immediately embraced by sociologists in general. Max Weber, another of the great classical sociologists, was a key exception. Thanks in part to Weber's mediation, by the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917, when communist leaders overthrew the monarchy, Marx's thinking was part of the general intellectual fabric, especially in Europe. But it was not until the 1960s when Marxism, or what is also called "conflict theory" (see p. 46), became a dominant perspective, that Marx was truly received as a giant of sociological thought.

social inequality the uneven and often unfair distribution of goods within society

capitalism an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production and characterized by competition, the profit motive, and wage labor

means of production anything that can create wealth: money, property, factories, and other types of businesses, and the infrastructure necessary to run them

proletariat workers; those who have no means of production of their own and so are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live

bourgeoisie owners; the class of modern capitalists who are the employers of wage labor

alienation the sense of dissatisfaction the modern worker feels as a result of producing goods that are owned and controlled by someone else, according to Marx

socialism a political system based on state ownership or control of principal elements of the economy in order to reduce levels of social inequality

MAX WEBER (1864–1920) As with Durkheim and Marx, Max Weber's work was deeply affected by his own life experience.

Weber grew up in the German capital city of Berlin. His father was a successful entrepreneur and member of a traditional and authoritarian aristocracy. Both his parents were Protestants and descendants of victims of religious persecution. Weber, though not religious himself, exhibited the relentless work ethic held in high regard by devout Protestants. Although he was sickly and withdrawn as a young man, work served as a way for him to rebel against his father and the leisure classes in general. He studied law and history and worked as a lawyer while establishing his credentials for a university teaching position.



Max Weber

While pursuing his studies Weber remained at home and financially dependent on his father, a situation he came to resent. Eventually he broke away, marrying his second cousin in 1893 and beginning a career teaching economics at the University of Freiburg and later the University of Heidelberg. There Weber rapidly established himself as a prominent member of the German intellectual scene. He might have continued in this manner had it not been for a disastrous visit from his parents in 1897, during which Weber fought bitterly with his father and threw him out of the house. When his father died just a month later, Weber suffered a nervous breakdown that left him unable to work for several years. The strain of these events and years of incessant labor had apparently caught up with him. He eventually recovered and resumed his intense scholarship, but the breakdown left Weber disillusioned with the strict academic regimen he had once embraced.

rationalization the application of economic logic to human activity; the use of formal rules and regulations in order to maximize efficiency without consideration of subjective or individual concerns

bureaucracies secondary groups designed to perform tasks efficiently, characterized by specialization, technical competence, hierarchy, written rules, impersonality, and formal written communication

iron cage Max Weber's pessimistic description of modern life, in which the "technical and economic conditions of machine production" control our lives through rigid rules and rationalization

verstehen "to understand"; Weber's term to describe good social research, which tries to understand the meanings that individual social actors attach to various actions and events

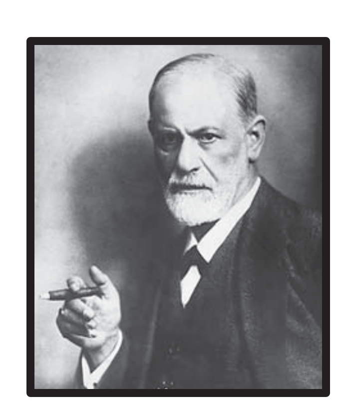
psychoanalysis the therapeutic branch of psychology founded by Sigmund Freud in which free association and dream interpretation are used to explore the unconscious mind

Weber's subsequent work expressed a pessimistic view of social forces, such as the work ethic, that shaped modern life. Like other social theorists of his time, Weber was interested in the shift from a more traditional society to a modern industrial society. Perhaps his most overriding concern was with the process of **rationalization**, or the application of economic logic to all spheres of human activity. In *Economy and Society* (1921/1968), he proposed that modern industrialized societies were characterized by efficient, goal-oriented, rule-governed **bureaucracies**. He believed that individual behavior was increasingly driven by such bureaucratic goals, which had become more important motivational factors than tradition, values, or emotion. Weber's classic sociological discussion of the origins of the capitalist system, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/1930), concluded with the image of people trapped by their industrious way of life in what he called an **iron cage** of bureaucratic rules. He believed that contemporary life was filled with disenchantment, the inevitable result of the dehumanizing features of the bureaucracies that dominated the social landscape.

Weber's work served as a bridge between early social theory, which focused primarily on the macro level of society, and subsequent theories that focused more intently on the micro level. He was interested in the individual motivation that led to certain social actions and how those actions helped shape society as a whole.

Unlike Marx and Durkheim, Weber was cautious about attributing any reality to social institutions or forces independent of individual action and meaningful thought. He invoked the German term ***verstehen*** ("to understand") to describe how a social scientist should approach the study of human action: with a kind of scientific empathy for actors' experiences, intentions, and actions. In this way Weber helped lay the groundwork for the contemporary paradigm called "symbolic interactionism" (see p. 50). In addition to influencing social theory, Weber also improved research methods by suggesting that researchers should avoid imposing their own opinions on their scientific analysis. His body of work remains one of the most important contributions to the discipline.

SIGMUND FREUD (1856–1939) As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, the Western world (Europe and America) was undergoing fundamental cultural changes, in which the repressive Victorian era gave way to the comparatively freer modern era. Sigmund Freud's theories about sex, society, and individual development were revolutionary in this context. Students are sometimes surprised to see Freud's name on a list of important sociologists. He is, of course, most often associated with psychology and more specifically with **psychoanalysis**, but his theories are also fundamental to an understanding of social behavior and modern civilization. A great deal of controversy has always surrounded Freud's career because of his intense focus on sexuality, and he has had as many detractors



Sigmund Freud

as supporters. Despite the controversy it is widely acknowledged that Freud was among the most important social thinkers of the twentieth century. Many of his ideas, from the "Freudian slip" to the "ego trip," have become part of the common vernacular.

Given that Freud is the founder of psychoanalysis, it is especially interesting to consider how the features of his personal life may have influenced his work. He was born in Vienna, Austria, to an impoverished Jewish family. The first boy in his family, he was favored by his parents, who expected great things from him. After graduating from the University of Vienna in 1873, Freud drifted from one subject to the next until he finally discovered neurology (the study of the brain and nervous system), a field that would satisfy his abiding curiosity about the mysteries of the human psyche. In 1881, he received a degree in medicine and set up in a medical practice. Freud was both a medical practitioner and a clinical researcher, and his patients provided him with a wealth of scientific data. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud outlined the principles of psychoanalysis, and helped to establish his own reputation and that of the emerging discipline.

Freud was interested not only in individual minds but also in the way that mental processes have influenced the whole of history and culture. In his book *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), he proposes that there are two primary forces in human nature: the life instinct (**Eros**, or libido) and the death instinct (**Thanatos**, or aggression). Because many of our instincts in their most primitive forms are selfish or inappropriate, they must be turned inward and either repressed or sublimated into other purposes. **Repression** can lead to various neuroses. But **sublimation** can mean that instinctual desires are redirected into more socially acceptable expressions. Thanatos, the death instinct, can result in violence and destruction in its negative expression (repression), but in its positive expression (sublimation) is transformed into competition and protection. Eros can lead to lust and gluttony in its negative expression, but in its positive expression is transformed into social bonding and creativity. Freud believed that all the greatest accomplishments of modern civilization—from scientific discoveries to forms of government and exquisite works of art—were a result of the sublimation of both instincts. Of course, he contends, this is also why we are all somewhat discontented and why living in society is such an uneasy bargain. We can never fully satisfy our deepest desires, so we trade them for a safer, more constructive existence together in a community.

Freud is more often associated with other famous psychologists of his time, such as Alfred Adler and Carl Jung, than with other famous sociologists, such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. But like these classical sociologists Freud was concerned with the large-scale social changes of the Industrial Revolution and their effect on the individual. When he discussed discontent he was describing some of the same problems of modern life that were referred to by Marx as alienation, by Weber as disenchantment, and by Durkheim as anomie. Freud was also interested in the development of the self and, much like later social psychologists, saw this as the result of social processes.

During the span of his career Freud became an internationally known figure. His work, in many ways, was threatening to the existing political, social, and moral climate of his times. He had emerged from a Victorian period when references to human sexuality were not a subject for public discussion, and he lived and worked under totalitarian and fascist regimes in which independent thinking was not always encouraged. In 1938, during the Nazi invasion, he was forced to leave Austria. His sisters were even more unfortunate; they perished in the German death camps. Freud emigrated to London, where he died the next year, leaving a legacy that continues to inspire and infuriate.

Eros in Freudian psychology, the drive or instinct that desires productivity and construction

Thanatos in Freudian psychology, the drive or instinct toward aggression or destruction

repression the process that causes unwanted or taboo desires to return via tics, dreams, slips of the tongue, and neuroses, according to Freud

sublimation the process in which socially unacceptable desires are healthily channeled into socially acceptable expressions, according to Freud

paradigm a set of assumptions, theories, and perspectives that make up a way of understanding social reality

Modern Schools of Thought

As the twentieth century dawned and the careers of theorists like Weber and Freud matured, political, cultural, and academic power began to shift from Europe to America. As manifested by the waves of emigrants leaving the Old World for the New, America was seen as the land of opportunity, both material and intellectual. So it was in the twentieth century, and increasingly in the United States, that the discipline of sociology matured and began to coalesce into distinctive schools of thought.

Three major theoretical **paradigms** dominated twentieth-century sociology: structural functionalism, social conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. These paradigms are like theoretical umbrellas: their explanatory powers are meant to be quite broad. Although none can satisfactorily explain the full range of social phenomena, each one does give us some answers we can't find in the other two. Since these paradigms are so important to the discipline of sociology, we will be covering them in depth in this chapter,

structural functionalism a paradigm that begins with the assumption that society is a unified whole that functions because of the contributions of its separate structures

structure a social institution that is relatively stable over time and that meets the needs of society by performing functions necessary to maintain social order and stability

dysfunction a disturbance to or undesirable consequence of some aspect of the social system

manifest functions the obvious, intended functions of a social structure for the social system

latent functions the less obvious, perhaps unintended functions of a social structure

and a table that summarizes the major paradigms and gives examples of their application is included on page 60. Then, beginning with Chapter 4 each additional chapter in this text includes a "Theory in the Real World" table. These tables provide quick reference for theoretical applications and offer examples of how each of the three major sociological paradigms relates to the chapter's specific topics.

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism, or functionalist theory, has been very influential in the history of sociology and at times has been the dominant theoretical perspective in the discipline.

ORIGINS The origins of structural functionalism lie in the thinking of three early sociologists—Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and Emile Durkheim—each of whom conceived of society as a unified whole that functioned because of the contributions of its separate parts. Comte originally proposed that society could and should be studied as a whole. Spencer agreed—and added that society was an organism much like the human body; as there was a discipline of biology to study living organisms, so should there be a discipline of sociology to study social organisms. Durkheim concurred with Spencer and Comte, arguing for the study of society *sui generis*—as an object in and of itself. These ideas, which seem simple from our contemporary perspective, were in many ways revolutionary—crucial steps toward viewing society itself as something worthy of scientific study.

TENETS The main principles of the functionalist paradigm are these:

1. Society is a stable, ordered system of interrelated parts or structures.

2. Each structure has a function that contributes to the continued stability or equilibrium of the whole.

Structures are identified as social institutions like the family, the educational system, politics, and the economy; Durkheim, for example, was especially interested in religion as a social structure. Structures meet the needs of society by performing different functions, and every function is necessary to maintain social order and stability. Any disorganization or **dysfunction** in a structure must lead to change and to a new equilibrium, because if one structure is transformed, the others must adjust. For example, if families fail to discipline their children, schools, churches, and the courts must take up the slack.

It may seem contradictory that a theory so concerned with order and stability would emerge in a discipline that itself arose in the nineteenth century, a period of rapid social change. But it is important to remember that these early theorists lived in a world in which change had previously occurred much more slowly and that one response to rapid social change is to try to understand what had come before—stability, order, and equilibrium. It is absolutely appropriate, then, for a discipline that claims to study society to focus on stability and order as well as change and disorder.

OFFSHOOTS Functionalism's strong appeal lies in its ability to bring order to a potentially disorderly social world. This made it a dominant theoretical perspective for much of the nineteenth century and updated by such modern American functionalists as Talcott Parsons and Neil Smelser well into the twentieth. Parsons, for example, specified the types of functions that social structures might fulfill:

1. adaptation to the environment—the socialization of children, for example, by family, schools, and other social institutions

2. realization of goals—the opportunity for success, for example, provided by schools

3. social cohesion—people coming together through, for example, shared morals or religious values

4. the maintenance of cultural patterns—the passing along of traditions, norms, and values in families, schools, and religious communities

Another modern American functionalist, Robert Merton, delineated the theory even further, identifying "manifest" and "latent" functions for different social structures: **manifest functions** are the obvious, intended functions of a social structure, while **latent functions** are the less obvious, perhaps unintended functions. For example, the manifest functions of education are to prepare future members of society by teaching t hem how to read and write and by instructing them on society's system of norms, values, and laws. However, education has a latent function as well, which is to keep kids busy and out of trouble eight hours a day, five days a week, for twelve years (or longer). Do not doubt that this is also an important contribution to social order!

In Relationships

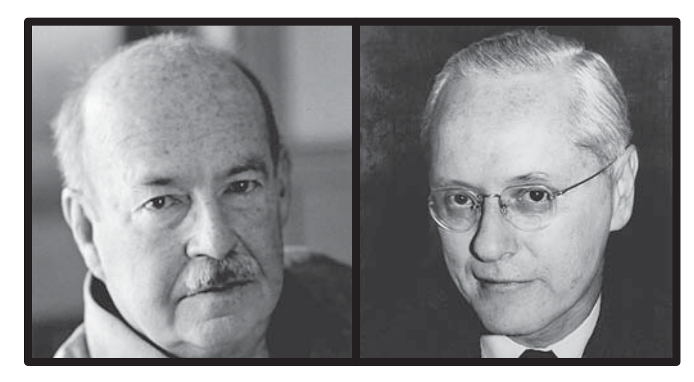
Gender, Parenting, and Theory

How can seemingly abstract sociological theories apply to our everyday experiences in personal relationships? There are, in fact, many ways. Take, for instance, the work of Nancy Chodorow, who was trained in Freudian theory as well as feminist social science. Her book *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) applies Freud's insights to the problem of gender inequality in parenting.

In the Freudian psychoanalytic account of gender, girls develop female identities by seeing themselves as similar to their primary caregiver: their mother. Boys develop male identities through their forced separation from the mother. In other words, girls learn how to be women by emulating the person with whom they form their primary caregiving bond; boys learn how to be men by detaching from and rejecting that person. Hence, boys (and men) tend to reject all the qualities associated with femaleness—including those linked to mothering. This makes it difficult for men to become involved, active parents to their own babies, whether they are boys or girls. As Chodorow states, "Women come to mother because they have been mothered by women. By contrast, that men are mothered by women reduces their parenting capacities" (p. 211). Chodorow's work can help explain the difficulties many couples have sharing parental duties equally. She argues that, according to psychoanalytic theory, men will not be able to parent properly until boys have been properly parented by men. Once men become active, involved parents, both boys and girls will benefit. Furthermore, she believes that eventually society will become less sexist overall, allowing boys and girls, men and women to explore their interests and potential without the constraints of traditional sex-role expectations.

But how will this transformation occur? By preparing for and demanding the active involvement of fathers as well as mothers in their babies' lives. Yes, that means you, male readers! Many of you will someday be fathers, and perhaps some of you already are. You can and should plan to be an active, involved nurturer and caregiver for your baby—on a daily basis, not just on weekends or when "Mom needs a day off." Take responsibility for every aspect of your child's daily needs. Plan your schedule and negotiate with your employer so that you can take the necessary time off. Challenge those who, when they see you pushing the stroller all by yourself, say, "Babysitting today, eh?" As a father, your role should not be to "help" the baby's mother; you should be an equal partner. Not only will you reap great personal rewards, but—according to psychoanalytic theory—you will make your baby's life better as well. And you will contribute to social change while you're at it. What could be more enticing?





Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) **Robert Merton (1910–2003)**

While the influence of functionalism waned in the late twentieth century, it did not die out. A "neofunctionalist" movement, begun in the 1980s and 1990s, attempts to "reconstruct" functionalist theories so that the connection to classical sociological theory (and Comte, Spencer, and Durkheim) remains relevant in a rapidly changing world. Theorists such as Neal Smelser (1985) and Jeffrey Alexander (1988) (Alexander and Smelser 1998) have attempted to modify functionalist theory to better incorporate problems like racial and ethnic identity in a diverse society.

CRITIQUES Functionalism, generally preoccupied with stability, takes the position that only dysfunction can create social change. This conservative bias is part of a larger problem with functionalism, in that it provides no insight into any social processes; it is a static rather than a dynamic model of society. It seems to have no interest in explaining human action—no apparent interest in the individual at all, except as she is integrated into society by social institutions.

Functionalism's explanations of social inequality are especially unsatisfying. The theory argues that if things like poverty, racism, and sexism exist, then they must serve a function for society; they must be necessary and inevitable. This view is problematic for many social scientists and social actors alike. Sociologist Herbert Gans, in a critical essay, reviews the functions of poverty for society. The poor, for example, do our "dirty work," filling the menial, low-wage jobs that are necessary to keep society running smoothly but that the nonpoor refuse to do. The poor provide a market for used and off-price goods and keep thrift stores and social welfare agencies in business. They have symbolic value as well, allowing the nonpoor to feel compassion toward the "deserving" poor as well as feeling threatened by the "undeserving" poor, who are often seen as dangerous social deviants (1971). Ultimately, the circular reasoning that characterizes functionalist thought turns out to be its biggest problem: the mere persistence of an institution should not be seen as an adequate explanation for its existence.

conflict theory a paradigm that sees social conflict as the basis of society and social change and emphasizes a materialist view of society, a critical view of the status quo, and a dynamic model of historical change

ADVANTAGES In a more positive vein, the advantages of functionalism include its broad reach and inclusion of all social institutions. Functionalism attempts to provide a universal social theory—a way of explaining everything in society in one comprehensive model. Were it not for some of the volcanic social upheavals of recent history (such as the civil rights, antiwar, and women's liberation movements, not easily explained using this model), functionalist theory might still reign supreme in American sociology.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, a catch-all phrase encompassing several theoretical strands that all emphasize social conflict as the basis of society, answers some of the critiques of structural functionalism. Its roots are in the mid-nineteenth-century European intellectual scene, specifically in the ideas of Karl Marx. Sometimes, therefore, the terms *conflict theory* and *Marxism* are used interchangeably in the social sciences.

ORIGINS Karl Marx, the father of conflict theory, wished not only to describe the world but also to change it. In Marx's time, when the Industrial Revolution was bringing sweeping changes, distinct social and economic classes were forming (such as those we are now familiar with: lower, middle, and upper classes) in the new urban society. Marx saw the increasing economic power of industrial capitalism as the primary tool for the oppression of the poor, and he felt passionately about redressing these inequalities of power. He envisioned a kind of classless society, in which each person both contributed to and benefited from the public good. He summed up this idea in an often-quoted remark: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." Marx believed that if individuals could be freed from oppressive conditions, they would then be able to pursue higher interests such as art and education. But in order to achieve such a state, the oppressed must first recognize how the current system worked against them, maintaining the status quo, or existing state of affairs.

TENETS Conflict theory proposes that conflict and tension are basic facts of social life and suggests that people have disagreements over goals and values and are involved in struggles over both resources and power. The theory thus focuses on the processes of dominance, competition, upheaval, and social change. The main emphases:

1. a materialist view of society (focused on labor practices and economic reality)
2. a critical stance toward existing social arrangements
3. a dynamic model of historical change (in which the transformation of society is inevitable)

Marx maintained that economic productivity was related to other processes in society, including political and intellectual life. Because the bourgeoisie controlled the financial realm, they could also use their wealth and power to gain control over other parts of society. Many of the other major social institutions served to further reinforce the class structure, so that the state, education, religion, and even the family were organized to represent the interests of those in power.

To Marx, a kind of **ideology**, or belief system, permeated society: "the ruling ideas of each age have . . . been the ideas of the ruling class" (Marx and Engels 1962, p. 52). Thus, the values and beliefs that seemed to be widely held were actually a kind of justification that helped to rationalize and explain the status quo. Most people readily accepted the prevailing ideology, despite the fact that it failed to represent the reality of their lives. Marx referred to this acceptance as **false consciousness**, a condition of naïveté or denial of the truth that allowed for the perpetuation of the inequalities inherent in the class structure. For example, he is often quoted as saying, "Religion is the opiate of the masses." This is not a criticism of religion as much as it is a criticism of the use of religion by the ruling class to create false consciousness in the working class. Encouraged in their religiosity, the proletariat focus on the happiness waiting for them in the afterlife rather than on the deprivations they suffer in this world. Indeed, heaven is seen as a reward for patiently suffering those deprivations. How does this serve the interests of the ruling class? By keeping the working class from demanding better conditions in this life.

Marx argued that the only way to change the status quo was for the masses to attain what he referred to as **class consciousness**, or revolutionary consciousness. This can happen only when people recognize how society works and challenge those in power. He believed that when there was enough tension and conflict, it would eventually lead to social change. He was optimistic in assuming that a system based on economic exploitation essentially sowed the seeds of its own destruction. Marx proposed a **dialectical model** of historical or social change, whereby two extreme positions would eventually necessitate some kind of compromise between them: the resulting "middle ground" would mean that society had actually moved forward. Any existing social arrangement (called the **thesis**) would inevitably generate its opposite (**antithesis**), and the contradictions and conflicts between the two would lead to an altogether new social arrangement (**synthesis**).

OFFSHOOTS Marx's work has been reinterpreted and applied in various ways for more than a hundred years. Some of the most famous examples of Marxism became evident in the communist and socialist systems that developed as a result of his ideas. Some have since fallen (like the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries), others have remained in place (Cuba, North Korea), and new social experiments incorporating aspects of Marxism may be yet to come. Of interest to us as students of sociology is how Marxist ideas have evolved within the greater intellectual community. Many strands of thinking have developed out of Marxism. W.E.B. DuBois, for example, applied Marxist ideas about class consciousness to the experience of racial inequality. African Americans, he argued, possessed what he called a **double consciousness**, meaning that they were entitled to rights and freedoms as Americans that they were denied as people of African heritage. This contradiction caused tension both for African Americans and for the larger society.

Other sociologists inspired by conflict theory included C. Wright Mills, who was interested in the role of **elites** (those in power) in society. Additional conflict-inspired sociological concepts include world-systems theory (Wallerstein 1974/1997), which examines global inequality and the exploitation of poor nations by wealthy nations, and Theda Skocpol's work on political upheaval across different nations (1979).

One of the most widely adopted forms of modern Marxism is called **critical theory** (also sometimes referred to as the Frankfurt School or neo-Marxism). From the 1930s to the 1960s, critical theory was arguably at the cutting edge of social theory. Critical theorists were among the first to see the importance of mass communications and popular

ideology a system of beliefs, attitudes, and values that directs a society and reproduces the status quo of the bourgeoisie

false consciousness a denial of the truth on the part of the oppressed when they fail to recognize the interests of the ruling class in their ideology

class consciousness the recognition of social inequality on the part of the oppressed, leading to revolutionary action

dialectical model Marx's model of historical change, whereby two extreme positions come into conflict and create some new third thing between them

thesis the existing social arrangements in a dialectical model

antithesis the opposition to the existing arrangements in a dialectical model

synthesis the new social system created out of the conflict between thesis and antithesis in a dialectical model

double consciousness W.E.B. DuBois's term for the conflict felt by and about African Americans, who were both American (and hence entitled to rights and freedoms) and African (and hence subject to prejudices and discrimination) at the same time

elites those in power in a society

critical theory a contemporary form of conflict theory that criticizes many different systems and ideologies of domination and oppression



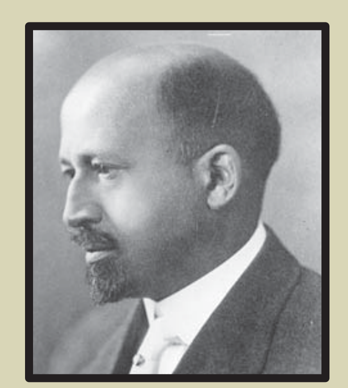
W.E.B. DuBois: Addressing Racial Inequality in Theory and Praxis

William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B. DuBois) was one of the most influential African American leaders of the early twentieth century and a notable pioneer in the sociology of race relations. DuBois was, to his admirers, a brilliant and prolific scholar and a tireless defender of freedom, justice, and equality. After becoming the first African American to earn a PhD from Harvard University, he did groundbreaking research on the history of the slave trade, post–Civil War reconstruction, the problems of urban ghetto life, and the nature of black American society; his most influential ideas are featured in such books as *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), *The Negro* (1915), *The Gift of Black Folk* (1924), *Black Folk: Then and Now* (1939), and *Dusk of Dawn* (1940).

DuBois was so prolific that it is often said that all subsequent studies of race and racial inequality in America depend to some degree on his work. He was a forerunner in the civil rights, black nationalism, and Pan-African movements; and he was a founding member, in 1909, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization committed to the cause of ending racism and injustice. DuBois was recognized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who called him a gifted seeker of social truths and a scholar who aspired to fill the immense void that existed in the study of black people. After a lifetime of groundbreaking scholarship and social activism, though, DuBois finally grew disillusioned with the United States. In 1961, he moved to Ghana, Africa, where he lived and (two years later, at age ninety-five) died, an expatriate in self-imposed exile.

Throughout his life, as a result of his deepening desire to affect social change, DuBois was involved in various forms of social activism. He continued to serve as director of publicity and research for the NAACP and editor of its magazine *Crisis* until 1934. In addition, he wrote weekly columns for a variety of newspapers, delivered thousands of lectures across the country, and took part in the Harlem Renaissance (an artistic movement of the 1920s and 30s) as a poet and playwright. His ideas were widely disseminated, influencing the generations of black Americans who followed. Less than one year after his death, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to discriminate against anyone based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

While it is unlikely that any of us will have the same broad, sweeping impact on our society that DuBois did, it is clear that many of us will follow in his footsteps in some way. If you study race or inequality as part of your major (or in graduate school), you can do so in part because DuBois made it possible. Your participation in any movement for civil rights or social liberation builds on his work as a scholar



W.E.B. DuBois (1868–1963) DuBois called the United States a country of "magnificent possibilities" but one that was "selling its birthright." He praised America for its noble souls and generous people and was grateful for the education the country provided him, but he also pointed out its ongoing history of injustices, crimes, and mistakes.

and an activist. Whether you join your university's chapter of MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan), the Black Student Union, the Asian American Association, the Feminist Society, or the Diversity Club, you are walking on a pathway that was built, in part, by DuBois's efforts. And if you become an activist, working to end discrimination against the disabled or to stop hate crimes against gays and lesbians, you are doing what DuBois hoped we would all do: use our academic knowledge in the fight against inequality, exploitation, and discrimination. According to DuBois, this was the key to a peaceful society. What will your contribution be?



Martin Luther King Jr. at the 1963 March on Washington

praxis practical action that is taken on the basis of intellectual or theoretical understanding

symbolic interactionism a paradigm that sees interaction and meaning as central to society and assumes that meanings are not inherent but are created through interaction

culture as powerful ideological tools in capitalist societies. They coined the term *culture industries* to refer to these increasingly important social institutions (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979). They also criticized the growing consumerism associated with the spread of capitalism, believing that this could ultimately lead to a decline in personal freedom and the decay of democracy (Marcuse 1964/1991). Critical theory influenced several generations of radical (leftist) thinkers throughout Europe and the United States, inspiring the cultural studies movement (see Chapter 4) and the postmodernists (see p. 59), who later assumed the cutting edge of social theory in the 1980s and 90s (Habermas 1984, 1987). Two other modern perspectives, feminism and critical race theory, take conflict theory's insights on economic inequality and adapt them to the study of contemporary inequalities of gender and race, respectively (Crenshaw et al. 1996; Matsuda et al. 1993). Thus, despite Marx's single-minded focus on economic exploitation and transformation, his ideas have helped inspire other theorists of inequality in ways he might not have been able to imagine.

CRITIQUES Conflict theory stands in sharp contrast to structural functionalism. Conflict theory argues that just because some social arrangement exists does not mean that it is necessarily beneficial for society; it may merely represent the interests of those in power. The theory challenges the status quo and emphasizes the need for social upheaval and change. In focusing on tension and conflict, however, it can often ignore those parts of society that are truly orderly, stable, and enduring. Although society certainly has its share of disagreements and competition, which threaten to break it apart, there are also shared values and common beliefs that hold it together. Conflict theory can be criticized for overlooking these less controversial dimensions of social reality.

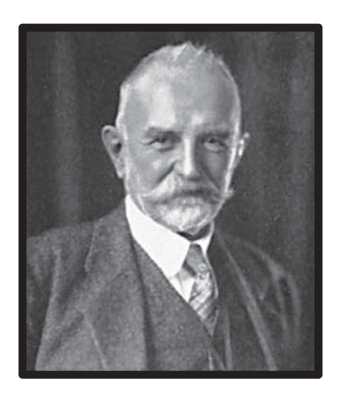
ADVANTAGES One of Marx's great contributions to the social sciences is the principle of **praxis**, or practical action: intellectuals, he felt, should not only theorize about social change, they should act on what they believed. Indeed Marxist ideas have been important in achieving change through many of the social movements of the twentieth century, including the civil rights, antiwar, women's rights, gay rights, animal rights, environmental, and multicultural movements. Without these groups rising up to protest the status quo, we might never have addressed some of the century's social problems. Conflict theory is useful in understanding not only macro-level social issues (like systematic discrimination against minority groups) but also micro-level personal interactions (like those between bosses and employees).

Symbolic Interactionism

Sociology's third major paradigm, **symbolic interactionism**, has proved the most influential of the twentieth century. It is America's unique contribution to the discipline and an answer to many of the criticisms of other paradigms. It helps explain both our individual personalities and the ways in which we are all linked together; it allows us to understand the processes by which social order and social change are constructed. As a theoretical perspective, it is vital, versatile, and evolving.

ORIGINS Symbolic interactionism is derived largely from the teachings of George Herbert Mead, a professor at the University of Chicago in the 1910s and 20s. At that time the burgeoning Sociology Department at Chicago was led by Albion Small, a philosopher by training. There were very few sociology departments in the country then, which meant that Small had to start from scratch. He recruited faculty from various Eastern colleges for the fledgling department, which grew to include such influential sociologists as Robert Park, W. I. Thomas, Charles Horton Cooley, and later Mead and Herbert Blumer. Together they developed one of the most influential branches of sociology in the twentieth century, called the Chicago School. Most of the early appointments that Small made were male professors from theological and philosophical backgrounds. However, the department's development was also profoundly shaped by women sociologists, including Jane Addams, who worked for the rights of the immigrant poor and for women's suffrage, and by pioneering black sociologist W.E.B. DuBois, who saw sociology as a tool to help understand and remedy racial prejudice. Both Addams and DuBois took conflict-inspired ideas about the problem of social inequality and used symbolic interactionist-inspired, street-level approaches to solving it.

Chicago was in many ways a "frontier" city for the twentieth century; transformed rapidly by industrialization, immigration, and ethnic diversity, the city became a laboratory for a new type of sociology. Chicago School sociology is methodologically and theoretically different from what had come before in Europe and America. Instead of doing comparative and historical work, the Chicagoans went



George Herbert Mead (1863–1931)

into the field to perform interviews and collect data. They focused on social action and everyday interactions (such as race relations in urban neighborhoods) as the building blocks of social phenomena.

While the Chicago School is the acknowledged home of symbolic interactionism, the theory's roots can also be traced to Weber's concept of *verstehen* ("empathetic understanding") and to the philosophical perspective called **pragmatism**. One of America's most prominant pragmatists was William James (1842–1910), Harvard professor and "Renaissance man" of the late 1800s and early 1900s. James's interests spanned art, anatomy, medicine, law, education, theology, philosophy, and psychology; he also traveled extensively and was acquainted with some of the most influential scholars of the time. To James pragmatism meant seeking the truth of an idea by evaluating its usefulness in everyday life: in other words, if it works, it's true! He thought that living in the world involved making practical adaptations to whatever we encountered; if those adaptations made our lives run more smoothly, then the ideas behind them must be both useful and true. James's ideas inspired educational psychologist and philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952), who also grappled with pragmatism's main questions: How do we adapt to our environments? How do we acquire the knowledge that allows us to act in our everyday lives? Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection also focused on how organisms adapted to their environments. But while Darwin proposed that this adaptation takes place over generations and generations, pragmatists implied that the process of adaptation was essentially immediate and that it involved conscious thought.

George Herbert Mead pulled these ideas (and others, too) together into a theory meant to address questions about the relationship between thought and action, the individual and society, a theory that focused on micro-level interactions. After his death in 1931, his student Herbert Blumer gave Mead's theory a name: symbolic interactionism.

Mead was born in South Hadley, Massachusetts, in 1863. His father, a professor of theology at Oberlin College, died when George was a teenager, and his widowed mother eventually became president of Mount Holyoke College. Mead attended college at Oberlin and Harvard and did his graduate studies in psychology at the Universities of Leipzig and Berlin in Germany. Before he became a full-time professor of psychology at the University of Michigan and later the University of Chicago, Mead waited tables and did railroad surveying and construction work. He was also a tutor to William James's family in Cambridge, Massachusetts; since his later theories were influenced by James, we can only wonder exactly who was tutoring whom in this arrangement!

Mead was inspired by John Dewey and Charles Darwin, as well as James, to identify a psychology that took the social into account as well as the individual and to explain humans' practical adaptations to their environment. Also, his Protestant upbringing and long association with progressive Oberlin (the first college in the United States to admit women) instilled in him a desire to advance social understanding. As a psychologist, then, he was uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between sociology and psychology and to address the links between the individual and society.

For Mead both human development and the meanings we assign to everyday objects and events are fundamentally social processes—they require the interaction of multiple individuals. And what is crucial to the development of self and society is language, the means by which we communicate with one another. For Mead there is no mind without language, and language itself is a product of social interactions (Mead 1934, pp. 191–92). Here, according to symbolic interactionism, is the essential connection between the individual and the social.

According to Mead the most important human behaviors consist of linguistic "gestures," such as words and facial expressions. People have developed the ability to engage in conversation using these gestures; further, both society and individual selves are constructed through this kind of symbolic communication. Mead argued that we use language to "name ourselves, think about ourselves, talk to ourselves, and feel proud or ashamed of ourselves" and that "we can act toward ourselves in all the ways we can act toward others" (Hewitt 2000, p. 10). He was curious about how the mind developed but did not believe that it developed separately from its social environment. For Mead, then, society and self were created through communicative acts like speech and gestures; the individual personality was shaped by society, and vice versa.

Herbert Blumer's work continued where Mead's had left off. While completing his master's degree Blumer played football for the University of Missouri Tigers, and during the 1920s and 1930s he maintained

pragmatism a theoretical perspective that assumes organisms (including humans) make practical adaptations to their environments. Humans do this through cognition, interpretation, and interaction

On the Job

In the Footsteps of Jane Addams

Jane Addams was a pioneer in the field of sociology, having studied not only the effects of the Industrial Revolution on the poor and immigrants but also the widely misunderstood role of women in society. She was one of the first proponents of applied sociology, which meant that she did not just theorize about the most pressing problems of her day but addressed them through hands-on activities in the very communities that were the subject of her research. In this way, she brought her training and expertise to the job of establishing and running the community center for which she is best known, Hull House. The idea had come to her on a trip to England, when she had visited a settlement house in the slums of London that was helping to ease the suffering of women, children, and immigrants. She was struck by the need to establish a similar house in the United States that would provide for the needs of the poor.

Hull House opened in Chicago in 1889. It offered medical care, legal advice, and child care to the poor and new immigrants, as well as classes in English, vocational skills, and the arts. A mere two years later, it was serving over two thousand people every week. This was one of the first, and most successful, models of social reform, bringing support and resources into the communities where they were most needed. It became an important meeting place for intellectuals, many of them from the University of Chicago. Addams published several books on the subject, including *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (1895) and her popular autobiography, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910). Hull House developed into an internationally renowned institution, as Addams also gained in public reputation.

Because she is so readily identified with her role as a social worker at Hull House, many of Jane Addams's other accomplishments are often overlooked. She sought social reforms in such areas as housing, sanitation, workers' unions and wages, industrial safety, child labor laws, schooling, and juvenile justice. She was an early American feminist, fighting for women's suffrage and against gender discrimination, and was a founder of the American Civil Liberties Union



Jane Addams (1860–1935)
"I do not believe that women are better than men. We have not wrecked railroads, nor corrupted legislature, nor done many unholy things that men have done; but then we must remember that we have not had the chance."

(ACLU) and, along with W.E.B. DuBois, the NAACP. Addams believed that many social problems could be solved by allowing women and ethnic minorities to participate more freely in all spheres of social life, and she proved this by her own example. As an active member of the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago, she was one of a handful of women there who made important intellectual contributions to the Chicago School. And for her work as an antiwar activist and founding president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, she became the first American woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Hull House is still in operation today—as a museum and event center on the University of Illinois, Chicago campus—and hosts Tuesday lunch discussions that feature free soup for all and open debate about current social and political issues. Addams's ideals have inspired activists all over the world, in community centers, antipoverty workshops, and mutual-aid societies. One excellent example is the Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. The Hmong, a Southeast Asian ethnic group, were forced to flee the deadly Communist regimes in Cambodia and Laos in the aftermath of the Vietnam War (1974), having assisted the United States as anticommunist guerrilla fighters. Many came to the United States and settled in the upper Midwest with no proficiency in English, employment qualifications,

or other practical skills necessary for life in the industrialized First World. This led to poverty, isolation, and serious cultural conflicts between Hmong immigrants and their neighbors. The Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul provides the services families need to adjust to life in the United States (language lessons, job skills, and citizenship classes) and teaches Hmong history, culture, and religious practices to people (like doctors and police officers) who work in predominantly Hmong neighborhoods. Under the leadership of executive director Txong Pao Lee, the center's goals are to promote the personal development of Hmong immigrants and to enhance cross-cultural understanding in support of a multicultural society.

When it comes to taking sociological insights into the real world and making them work, Jane Addams set high standards for us to follow. People like the staff and volunteers at the Hmong Cultural Center are living up to these standards. And many of the careers that sociology majors tend to enter also embody the spirit of Addams's legacy. Sociology majors often find themselves drawn to work in social welfare, education, counseling, community organizing, the judicial system, and other "helping" professions. If you become a teacher, a social worker, a juvenile probation officer, a peace activist, a doctor at a free clinic, or a lawyer with a public interest group, you will be putting sociology to work in the tradition of Addams and the women and men of Hull House. Indeed, it is possible that you are doing such work right now, either as a paid employee or as a volunteer at a place like the Hmong Cultural Center. You may never win a Nobel Prize, but your efforts will link you to someone who did. Doing applied sociology, as Jane Addams proved, means that your job can make a difference.





Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul, Minnesota The center provides essential services for Minneapolis's large Hmong community and offers educational opportunities for non-Hmong to learn about the culture of their Hmong friends and neighbors. These dolls from the center (above) are dressed in traditional Hmong clothing.

dramaturgy a theoretical paradigm that uses the metaphor of the theater to understand how individuals present themselves to others

ethnomethodology the study of "folk methods," or everyday interactions, that must be uncovered rather than studied directly

conversation analysis a sociological approach that looks at how we create meaning in naturally occurring conversation, often by taping conversations and examining them

dual careers as a sociology professor and a professional football player for the former Chicago Cardinals. On Mondays he would often come to class wrapped in bandages after a tough Sunday game. What he did off the gridiron, however, was provide a compelling exposition of Mead's ideas and a clear statement of the fundamentals of symbolic interactionism. Blumer also made a Chicago School appeal for researchers to get "down and dirty" with the dynamics of social life.

Mead and Blumer became the somewhat unwitting founders of a much larger theoretical perspective than they had ever imagined. Mead's death made Blumer into symbolic interactionism's official spokesperson, and his long career at the University of Chicago and later at UC Berkeley meant that many graduate students, among them Erving Goffman and Harvey Sacks, were trained in the "Blumerian" version of symbolic interactionism. When Blumer died in 1986, innovators were able to extend the field in a variety of ways, allowing new perspectives to come under the umbrella of symbolic interactionism.

TENETS For symbolic interactionists society is produced and reproduced through our interactions with each other by means of language and our interpretations of that language. Symbolic interactionism sees face-to-face interaction as the building block of everything else in society, because it is through interaction that we create a meaningful social reality. Here are the three basic tenets of symbolic interactionism, as laid out by Blumer in 1969 (p. 2):

1. We act toward things on the basis of their meanings. For example, a tree can provide a shady place to rest, or it can be an obstacle to building a road or home; each of these meanings suggests a different set of actions, and this is as true for physical objects like trees as it is for people (like mothers or cops), institutions (church or school), beliefs (honesty or equality), or any social activity.
2. Meanings are not inherent; rather, they are negotiated through interaction with others. That is, whether the tree is an obstacle or an oasis is not an intrinsic quality of the tree itself but rather something that people must hash out themselves. The same tree can mean one thing to one person and something else to another.
3. Meanings can change or be modified through interaction. For example, the contractor who sees the tree as an obstacle might be persuaded to spare it by the neighbor. Now the tree is something to build around rather than bulldoze.

Although symbolic interactionism is focused on how self and society develop through interaction with others, it is useful in explaining and analyzing a wide variety of specific social issues, from inequalities of race and gender to the group dynamics of families or coworkers.

OFFSHOOTS Symbolic interactionism opened the door for innovative sociologies that focus on social acts (like face-to-face interaction) rather than social facts (like vast bureaucratic institutions). For example, Marjorie DeVault studied cooking and serving meals (1991/1994), and Sharon Zukin analyzed shopping (2004); both studies show how large-scale social structures like the family and the economy are produced at the ground level by the social interactions of family cooks and mall shoppers.

Erving Goffman carried symbolic interactionist conceptions of the self forward in a seemingly radical way, indicating that the self is essentially "on loan" to us from society; it is created through interaction with others and hence ever-changing. For example, you may want to make a different kind of impression on a first date than you do on a job interview or when you face an opponent in a game of poker. Goffman used the theatrical metaphor of **dramaturgy** to describe the ways in which we engage in presenting ourselves to others; in this way he elaborated on Mead's ideas in a specific fashion, utilizing a wide range of data to help support what for Mead had been a purely theoretical construct.

Harold Garfinkel, the founder of **ethnomethodology** (the study of "folk methods," or everyday analysis of interaction), maintains that as members of society we must acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to act practically in our everyday lives. He argues that much of this knowledge remains in the background, "seen but unnoticed," and that we assume others to have the same knowledge we do as we interact with them. These assumptions allow us to make meaning out of even seemingly troublesome events; but they also can be quite precarious, and there is a good deal of work required to maintain them, even as we are unaware that we are doing so.

Conversation analysis, pioneered by sociologists at UCLA, is also related to symbolic interactionism. It is based on the ethnomethodological idea that as everyday actors we are constantly analyzing and giving meaning to our social world (Schegloff 1986, 1999; Clayman 2002). Conversation

analysts are convinced that the best place to look for the social processes of meaning-production is in naturally occurring conversation and that the best way to get at the meanings an everyday actor gives to the things others say and do is to look closely at what he says and does next. Conversation analysts therefore use highly technical methods to scrutinize each conversational turn closely, operating on the assumption that any larger social phenomenon is constructed step-by-step through interaction.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the scope of symbolic interactionism widened, its topics multiplied, and its theoretical linkages became more varied. In fact, Gary Fine argues that "symbolic interactionism . . . has a diversity that may vitiate [eliminate] its center" (1993, p. 65). In other words symbolic interactionism is expanding so fast that it may soon erupt into something else entirely.



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Theories of Celebrity Gossip

Perezhilton.com is consistently rated as one of the most frequently visited websites among college students. Written and operated by blogger Mario Lavandeira, Perezhilton.com has been exposing the real and rumored doings of celebrities since 2005, posting several brief blurbs each day that chronicle celebrity activities. These entries are accompanied by paparazzi photos and snide commentary by both Lavandeira himself and throngs of readers who post their own observations and criticisms, humorous and serious.

Lavandeira's website is part of a new breed of celebrity gossip outlets, including TMZ.com and WWTDD.com, among others. These sites can almost instantly consolidate and present information that used to take at least a week to appear in printed gossip magazines like *People* or *Us*. They can also provide more explicit editorial commentary than the print magazines can. For example, while *People* might print a picture of Madonna without her husband and speculate that they are breaking up, WWTDD.com can print the same picture with the following remarks (on July 28, 2008):



Blogger Mario Lavandeira, a.k.a. Perez Hilton

> Madonna left the Kabala center in New York this weekend with her daughter Lourdes, and I think we're close enough by now for me to admit she scares the ever living [****] out of me. From the neck up she looks like the puppet from Saw. Is it any wonder Guy Richie wants to move on? There's no way she's even healthy enough to have sex . . .

It gets worse, but we can't print the rest in a "family" textbook! Finally, these sites allow for almost immediate feedback from and discussion among far-flung readers, something not possible in the pre-internet gossip magazine days.

Other staple entries on celebrity gossip sites include photos of celebrities combined with evaluative commentary about their bodies, outfits, mates, children, and other aspects of their beings and behaviors. While many criticize such information as mean, stupid, and shallow, one doesn't have to enjoy celebrity gossip to see its sociological relevance. And items from celebrity gossip blogs often end up in the mainstream news—in the summer of 2007 Lavandeira "broke a story" on the death of Cuban president Fidel Castro that was picked up by the conventional media and broadcast widely. The story turned out to be untrue—but the incident speaks to the influence of such blogs on our understanding of what constitutes news. And this reinforces the fact that just about every social phenomenon, including celebrity gossip blogs, is worthy of sociological analysis and theoretical application.

In this Data Workshop we'd like you to immerse yourself in the celebrity gossip blog of your choice. Pick five entries—scrutinize the pictures, read the headlines and text carefully, and review the reader comments as well. Now ask yourself the following questions from each of sociology's three major theoretical perspectives:

1. Structural Functionalist Theory
What is the function (or functions) of celebrity gossip blogs for society? What purpose(s) do they serve, and how do they help society maintain stability and order? Are there manifest and latent functions of celebrity gossip blogs? And are there any dysfunctions built into such publications?

2. Social Conflict Theory
What forms of inequality are revealed in celebrity gossip blogs? In particular, what do celebrity gossip blogs have to say about gender, race, and class inequalities? Who suffers and who benefits from the publication of celebrity gossip blogs?



3. Symbolic Interactionist Theory
What do celebrity gossip blogs mean to society as a whole? What do they mean to individual members of society? Can they have different meanings for different individuals or groups of individuals? How do those meanings get constructed in interaction? And how do celebrity gossip blogs shape and influence our everyday lives?

Make sure you can explain your answers to each of these questions, and complete one of the following two options, as directed by your instructor.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Answer each of the three sets of questions above, and prepare some written notes that you can refer to in class. Discuss your answers with other students in small groups.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Answer each of the three sets of questions above in a three-page essay explaining your positions. You may want to include snippets from your chosen celebrity gossip blog to illustrate your points.

CRITIQUES As a relative newcomer to the field of social theory, symbolic interactionism was dubbed "the loyal opposition" (Mullins 1973) by those who saw it solely as a reaction to the more dominant macrosociological theories (functionalism and conflict theory) that preceded it. Criticisms of symbolic interactionism proceed from this standpoint: that it must remain merely a supplement, rather than a competitor, to the more macrosocial theories because it doesn't take up the same questions that those more traditional perspectives do.

Gary Fine sums up the critiques in this way: symbolic interactionism is "apolitical (and hence, supportive of the status quo), unscientific (hence, little more than tenured journalism), hostile to the classical questions of macrosociology (hence, limited to social psychology), and astructural (hence, fundamentally nonsociological)" (1993, p. 65). These critiques argue that the scope of symbolic interactionism is limited, that it cannot properly address the most important sociological issues, and that its authority is restricted to the study of face-to-face interaction. Each of these critiques has been answered by defenders of symbolic interactionism over the years; ultimately, though, some of the critics have begun to see the usefulness of an interactionist perspective and have even begun incorporating it into more macro work.

ADVANTAGES Symbolic interactionism has been integrated relatively seamlessly into sociology, and its fundamental precepts are widely accepted. Symbolic interactionism proposes that social facts exist only because we create and re-create them through our interactions; this gives it wide explanatory power and a versatility that allows it to address any sociological issue.

One of the critiques of symbolic interactionism noted above is that it may be "astructural"; but interactionism does not refute the power of social structure to shape an actor's interpretive choices (see Chin and Phillips [2004] on social class and children's summer-school experiences, or Stacy Burns [2004] on judges' decision-making processes in cases involving uninsured defendants and the "deep pockets" of wealthy insurance companies). Another critique is that it is unscientific, without a systematic method for examining the social world—this could not be further from the truth; sociological methods in the interactionist tradition such as ethnography and conversation analysis are data rich, technically complex, and empirically well grounded (Schegloff 1999; J. Katz 1997). Interactionism sees the social world as subject to empirical description and analysis just as other scientific paradigms do. Even in the hotly contested micro-versus-macro debate, a kind of détente has been established, recognizing that all levels of analysis are necessary for sociological understanding and that interactionist theories and methods are critical for a full picture of social life to arise.

As society changes, so must the discipline that studies it, and symbolic interactionism has invigorated sociology in ways that are linked to the past and looking toward the future. It is "the only perspective that assumes an active, expressive model of the human actor and that treats the individual and the social at the same level of analysis" (O'Brien and Kollock 1997, p. 39). Therein lie its power and its appeal.



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Shopping for Theoretical Perspectives at Wal-Mart

In this Data Workshop, you will be asking and answering theoretically driven questions about a familiar social institution: Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart, the highest-grossing company in the United States (*Fortune* 2008a), is part of a widespread retail phenomenon called the "big box." Big-box stores are huge, warehouse-like buildings that feature just about every imaginable commodity under one roof. The Wal-Mart Super Center in East Peoria, Illinois, is an excellent example: in its vast, cavernous interior, you can buy groceries, guns, gardening equipment, books, clothes, appliances, furniture, pharmaceuticals, and greeting cards, all while waiting for your photos to be developed and your tires to be rotated. Wal-Mart seeks to be all things to all people—and judging by its position at the top of the Fortune 500 list, it seems to have succeeded.

Wal-Mart's success, though, has driven out of business thousands of local "mom and pop" stores, which just can't compete with the low prices and huge selection of the big box. When Wal-Mart moves into a town, independently owned businesses soon go under. Also, the company has been accused of underpaying and exploiting its low-wage workers (Ehrenreich 2001), union busting, and engaging in sex discrimination in hiring and promoting. There are at any given time multiple lawsuits pending against this corporate giant for its labor practices.

Think about your own shopping experiences (if not at Wal-Mart then at another big-box retailer). You might even want to visit your local store (you're bound to have one!). Walk up and down the aisles and observe the other shoppers. Note how and where the goods are displayed. How do the shoppers and staffers interact with the products and with each other? If you get a chance, try to view several of Wal-Mart's television commercials as well. Then sit down with the following questions and write out your answers. They should help you see how making different theoretical assumptions can allow us to analyze the same object but come up with different interpretations.

1. *Functionalist questions*

   What are the functions of Wal-Mart for society?

   Are they the same or different from the functions of Wal-Mart in our individual lives? How do the two types of functions connect?



Analyzing Wal-Mart How do different theoretical assumptions lead to different interpretations of a single research subject, such as Wal-Mart?

   Does Wal-Mart have both manifest and latent functions? What are they?

   Are there any dysfunctions of Wal-Mart for society? If so, what are they? How might these dysfunctions serve as incentives or catalysts for social change?

2. *Conflict questions*

   Does Wal-Mart affect every group in society in the same way?

   If not, what are the differences?

   How does Wal-Mart perpetuate the inequalities (of gender, race, class, religion, age, sexual orientation, etc.) in our society?

   How does Wal-Mart contribute to conflict between unequal groups in our society?

   How might Wal-Mart contribute to social change or the amelioration of inequalities in society?

3. *Interactionist questions*

   What kind of symbolic world are you likely to encounter inside a Wal-Mart store, and how does that affect the shopper's experience?

   How does Wal-Mart influence our interpersonal interactions?

   How do interpersonal interactions shape the Wal-Mart experience for shoppers? For workers?

How does Wal-Mart contribute to our socially constructed reality?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare written notes that you can refer to in class. Discuss your observations and responses to the above questions with other students in small groups. Listen for any differences or variations in each other's insights.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay describing your observations and answering the questions posed above. Make sure to refer to specific observations made during your Wal-Mart visit to support your analysis.

The creative application of each of these perspectives to the same social phenomenon can result in very different meanings—remember the blind men and the elephant? Whatever you think about Wal-Mart personally, you can use sociological theories as tools to help you see it differently and understand its position in the larger society.

New Theoretical Approaches

Because the three major paradigms all have weaknesses as well as strengths, they will probably never fully explain the totality of social phenomena, even when taken together. And because society itself is always changing, there are always new phenomena to explain. So new perspectives will, and indeed must, continue to arise. In this section we will consider three contemporary approaches: feminist theory, queer theory, and postmodern theory. Each is linked to a major area of contemporary social transformation: changing ideas about gender roles, changing notions of sexual identity, and the changes associated with a postindustrial, technologically based society.

feminist theory a theoretical approach that looks at gender inequities in society and the way that gender structures the social world

queer theory a paradigm that proposes that categories of sexual identity are social constructs and that no sexual category is fundamentally either deviant or normal

postmodernism a paradigm that suggests that social reality is diverse, pluralistic, and constantly in flux

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory has developed in the last 30 years in a way that revolutionized society, the social sciences, and the humanities. Feminism began as a social and political movement dedicated to securing the same rights for both women and men. It developed into a way of looking at the world that focuses on enhancing scholarly understanding of gender inequities in society. By applying its assumptions about gender inequality to various social institutions—the family, the economy, the mass media—feminist theory allows for a new way of understanding each of those institutions.

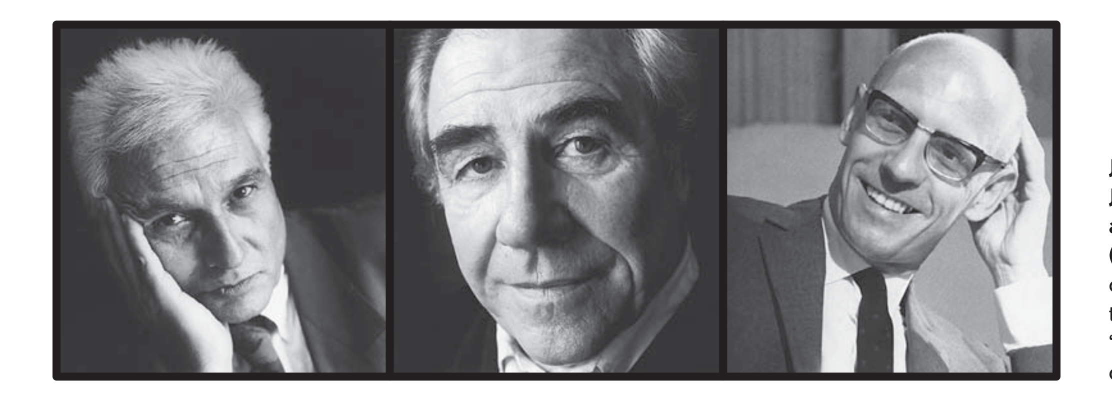
There is a link between feminist theory and conflict theory in that both deal with stratification and inequality in society, and both seek not only to understand that inequality but also to provide remedies for it. So feminist theory asks us to think and act differently when it comes to gender relations. Theorists such as Judith Butler (1999), bell hooks (2003), and Catharine MacKinnon (2005) link gender inequality with other social hierarchies—racial and ethnic inequality, class inequality, and inequality based on sexual orientation—and argue that gender and power are inextricably intertwined in our society.

Queer Theory

The gay and lesbian civil rights movement gained momentum in the 1970s and 80s, advocating changes in society's definitions of "normative" and "deviant" sexual identities. Again, this social and political movement gave rise to a new set of theoretical and conceptual tools for social scientists: **queer theory**. Queer theory, which arose in the late 1980s and early 90s, proposes that categories of sexuality—homo, hetero, bi, trans—are social constructs (Seidman 2003). In other words no sexual category is fundamentally deviant or normal; we create these meanings socially (which means that we can change those meanings as well). Indeed some theorists, such as Marjorie Garber (1997), argue that strict categories themselves are no longer relevant and that more fluid notions of identity should replace conventional dichotomies like gay/straight. In this way queer theory is related to the final theoretical perspective we'll be examining here: postmodernism.

Postmodern Theory

In the late twentieth century, some social thinkers looked at the proliferation of theories and data and began to question whether we could ever know society or ourselves with any certainty. What is truth, and who has the right to claim it? Or for that matter what is reality, and how can it be known? In an era of increasing doubt and cynicism, has meaning become meaningless? **Postmodernism**, a theory that encompasses a wide range of areas—from art and architecture, music and film, to communications and technology—addresses these questions.



Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007), and Michel Foucault (1926–84) While many commentators and critics identify these French intellectuals as "postmodernists," each one distanced himself from the label.

The postmodern perspective developed primarily out of the French intellectual scene in the second half of the twentieth century and is still associated with three of its most important proponents. It's probably worth noting that postmodernists themselves don't really like that label, but nonetheless Jacques Derrida (1967), Jean Baudrillard (1981/1994), and Michel Foucault (1980) are the major figures most often included in the group.

In order to understand postmodernism, we first need to juxtapose it with **modernism**, the movement against which it was a reaction. Modernism is both a historical period and an ideological stance that began with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, or Age of Reason. Modernist thought values scientific knowledge, a linear (or timeline-like) view of history, and a belief in the universality of human nature. In postmodernism, on the other hand, there are no absolutes—no claims to truth, reason, right, order, or stability. Everything is therefore relative—fragmented, temporary, and contingent. Postmodernists believe that certainty is illusory and prefer to play with the possibilities created by fluidity, complexity, multidimensionality, and even nonsense. They propose that there are no universal human truths from which we can interpret the meaning of existence. On one hand postmodernism can be celebrated as a liberating influence that can rescue us from the stifling effects of rationality and tradition. On the other it can be condemned as a detrimental influence that can imprison us in a world of relativity, nihilism, and chaos.

Postmodernists are also critical of what they call "grand narratives," the overarching stories and theories that justify dominant beliefs and give a sense of order and coherence to the world. Postmodernists are interested in "deconstructing," or taking apart and examining, these stories and theories. For example they claim that "factual" accounts of history are no more accurate than those that might be found in fiction. They prefer the notion of mininarratives, or small-scale stories, that describe individual or group practices rather than narratives that attempt to be universal or global. These mininarratives can then be combined in a variety of ways, creating a collage of meaning.

One way of understanding what postmodernism looks like is to examine how it has crept into our popular culture. Hip-hop music is an example of a postmodern art form. It is a hybrid music that borrows from other established genres, from rhythm and blues to rock and reggae. Hip-hop also takes samples from existing songs, mixes these with new musical tracks, and overlays it all with rap lyrics, resulting in a unique new sound. A film like *Moulin Rouge* also exemplifies the postmodern perspective: although ostensibly set in 1900 Paris, the film includes popular culture references from across many different time periods and cultures, so that characters can be dancing the can-can and singing "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" and Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" while dressed in classic Indian garb.

Many resist the postmodern turn and its position against essential meaning or truth; the rise in all types of religious fundamentalism may be a reaction to the postmodern view, an expression of the desire to return to absolute truths and steadfast traditions. Sociologists are quick to criticize postmodernism for having discarded the scientific method and the valid knowledge they believe it has generated. Social leaders with a conservative agenda have been suspicious of the postmodern impulse to dismiss moral standards. While it is clear that many people are critical of postmodernism, probably a much larger number are simply oblivious to it, which in itself may be more damning than any other type of response.

Nevertheless, although it is neither a well-known nor widely practiced perspective, postmodernism *has* gained supporters. Those who challenge the status quo, whether in the arts or politics or the academy, have found postmodernism attractive because of its ability to embrace a multiplicity of powerful and promising alternatives. At the

modernism a paradigm that places trust in the power of science and technology to create progress, solve problems, and improve life

very least postmodernism allows us to question our scientific ideals about clarity and coherence, revealing the inherent shortcomings and weaknesses in our current arguments and thus providing a way toward a deeper, more nuanced understanding of social life. As the most contemporary of the theoretical perspectives, postmodernism corresponds to the current Information Age and feels natural and intuitive for students whose lives are immersed in this world. By putting the focus back on individuals and small-scale activities in which change happens on a local, limited basis but in which it may ultimately be more successful, postmodernism seems to offer an alternative to such cultural trends as increasing consumerism and globalization. However unwelcome the theory might be to some of its critics, it is likely that the postmodern shifts we have already seen in society (in music and films for example) will continue.

Closing Comments

As a discipline sociology possesses the same qualities as the society it seeks to understand: it is complex, ever-changing, and deeply fascinating. It is also, however, somewhat unwieldy, and both classroom teachers and textbook authors often use a particular strategy to bring order to their

TABLE 2.1 ***Theory in Everyday Life***

Perspective	Level of Analysis	Focus of Analysis	Case Study: College Admissions in the United States
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Macrosociology	Assumes that society is a unified whole that functions because of the contributions of its separate structures.	Those who are admitted are worthy and well-qualified, while those who are not admitted do not deserve to be. There are other places in society for them besides the university.
CONFLICT THEORY	Macrosociology	Sees social conflict as the basis of society and social change and emphasizes a materialist view of society, a critical view of the status quo, and a dynamic model of historical change.	Admissions decisions may be made on the basis of criteria other than grades and scores. For example, some applicants may get in because their father is a major university donor, while others may get in because of their talents in sports or music. Some may be denied admission based on criteria like race or gender.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Microsociology	Asserts that interaction and meaning are central to society and assumes that meanings are not inherent but are created through interaction.	University admissions processes are all about self-presentation and meaning-making in interaction. How does an applicant present himself or herself in a way that will impress the admissions committee? How does the admissions committee develop an understanding of what kind of applicant it is looking for? How do applicants interpret their acceptances and rejections?
FEMINIST THEORY	Macro- or microsociology	Looks at gender inequities in society and the way that gender structures the social world.	Gender differences in admissions statistics reveal gender-based decision-making criteria and portend gendered differences in future college experiences. Female and male students receive different treatment in and out of the classroom.
QUEER THEORY	Macro- or microsociology	Questions the basis of all social categories, including but not limited to those involving sexuality.	Social categories (like sexuality, gender, race, etc.) shape university admissions decisions and the treatment of students once enrolled.
POSTMODERNIST THEORY	Macro- or microsociology	Suggests that social reality is diverse, pluralistic, and constantly in flux.	An acceptance doesn't mean you are smart, and a rejection doesn't mean you are stupid; be careful of any "facts" you may be presented with, as they are illusory and contingent.

presentation of sociology: they narrow their focus to a limited set of theoretical perspectives. It is our view, however, that an introductory sociology text should prepare students for the current state of the discipline. Though a historical perspective is indeed important, it is our feeling that you need to know what's happening in sociology *now*.

Despite the claims of some theorists, there is no acknowledged universal social theory that satisfactorily explains all sociological phenomena. And as you have learned in this chapter, this means that new social theories are always being developed, with the hope of explaining and predicting the patterns of social life even more comprehensively. For example each of the major theoretical perspectives discussed earlier has continued to develop since its inception: there are now neofunctionalist and neo-Marxist theories, as well as interactions between various classical theoretical perspectives that their originators could not have foreseen (one example is Marxist psychoanalytic theory!). Also, symbolic interactionist theories arose as distinctive critiques of the macro-level theories that had come before, so symbolic interactionism can be seen as a new theory in itself.

Social theory is a way of trying to explain what we observe in the world around us. For every new social phenomenon there will be attempts by theorists to explain it, understand it, analyze it, and predict its future. Trends, events, and transformations all beg for explanations, and social theories, classical and contemporary, attempt those explanations. Functionalism and feminism, for example, as different as they may seem on their respective faces, are really trying to accomplish similar goals: to explain why society is the way it is and to predict how it may change.

Ultimately, what is important to remember is that in every case, the contemporary grows out of the classical: older theories inspire and provoke newer ones. Theorists past and present engage in a dialogue with each other through scholarly responses to each other's ideas. That elephant called society has yet to be fully described, and until it is, the branches of sociology's family tree continue to grow and flower.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **Theory and Sociology's Family Tree** Pioneers of early social theory like Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, and Herbert Spencer lived at the beginning of an era of radical political and economic change, bringing unprecedented social problems. It was also an era when the scientific method began to be applied to the social world.
- **Classical Sociological Theory** Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber took for granted the effectiveness of the scientific method. In their theories, they tried to explain social order, social change, and social inequality as they watched the Industrial Revolution change their world. Durkheim examined the way changes to the economic system changed the type of social solidarity holding society together. Marx, troubled by the effects of capitalism, emphasized the importance of change and social conflict. He believed that scientific study required looking below the surface of society to the material and economic processes that created the social world. Weber saw rationalization and bureaucracy as dehumanizing forces but focused less on large-scale social structures and more on the process by which individuals interpret the social world.
- Sigmund Freud's ideas help explain how early childhood experiences (which are social) lead to the formation of the self. Nancy Chodorow, for example, has used Freudian psychology to help explain how gender differences in parenting styles can affect gender roles.
- **Modern Schools of Thought** Structural functionalism assumes that society is a stable, well-ordered system of related structures and that each structure contributes to the stability of the whole. It has been criticized for a conservative bias toward the status quo and for its failure to explain change. Conflict theory, in contrast, focuses on the material processes by which society sustains itself, largely struggles over resources and power. It has been criticized for ignoring elements of society that are stable and free of conflict. Symbolic interactionism focuses on the creation of meaning through individual interaction; offshoots include dramaturgy, ethnomethodology, and conversation analysis. It is sometimes criticized for ignoring social structure.

- **New Theoretical Approaches** Though partially inspired by conflict theory, feminist theory has explored gender inequality and the ways gender structures our social lives. More recently, queer theory has questioned the categories of sexual identity, and postmodern theory has questioned the very existence of *any* essential meaning or truth.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Think back to the biographical information about Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Are there particular events that may have influenced their theories?
2. The sociological theorists dealt with in this chapter are all from Europe or the United States, evidence of a Eurocentric bias in sociology. Are your other classes also Eurocentric?
3. Make a list of all the people you rely on to provide for your daily needs. How many of them do you think are similar to you? Does this support Durkheim's conclusion that we rely more on organic solidarity today?
4. Marx argued that the proletariat suffer from alienation as a result of losing control over the products of their labor. Make a list of all the jobs you can think of where you would have control over your own work. Do you think this control would make a difference in your own happiness?
5. Weber saw the proliferation of bureaucracies as one of the key features of the modern age. Think about the bureaucracies that are relevant to you. Do they allow you to make decisions based on your own personal desires? For example, what criteria does your university or college use to determine what classes you will take?
6. Pick a social structure other than education, and describe it in terms of its manifest and latent functions. For example, what is the manifest function of religion in your community? Can you think of any latent functions, ones that were not intended by the people in charge?
7. Marx described the way religion can be used by the ruling class to create false consciousness in the working class. Can you think of other types of ideologies that serve the interests of the ruling class?
8. Symbolic interactionism argues that meanings are not inherent in things or gestures but are socially derived and negotiated through interaction with others. Think of some recent fashion trend. Can you describe this trend in terms of what it means to those who embrace it? What sorts of interactions produce and maintain this meaning?
9. Because society is always changing, there are always new social phenomena that need a theory to make sense of them. If postmodernism rejects the belief that experience is structured or linear, what sort of changes in society do you think necessitated this insight?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Berman, Marshall. 2001. *Adventures in Marxism*. New York: Verso. Describes the changes in Marxism that followed the publication of *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, which revealed a Marx full of "sensual warmth and spiritual depth."

Dialectics for Kids (dialectics4kids.com). This website was created by Jack Fleck, the father of movie director Ryan Fleck, and uses examples, songs, and essays to explain how social change happens.

Douglas, Mary. 2002. *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge. Extends Durkheim's insights into the way that religion creates social solidarity and "religious ritual makes manifest to men their social selves."

Half Nelson. 2006. Dir. Ryan Fleck. THINKFilm. An idealistic young teacher teaches his eighth graders dialectics, illustrated with arm wrestling.

Hofstadter, Richard. 1992. *Social Darwinism in American Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press. Discusses the way early sociologists approached the insights of Charles Darwin and the very different conclusions drawn by pragmatist philosophers like William James.

The Magnetic Fields. 1999. "The Death of Ferdinand de Saussure." *69 Love Songs*. Merge. A tongue-in-cheek pop song about the indeterminacy associated with postmodernism.

Pfohl, Stephen. 1992. *Death at the Parasite Cafe: Social Science (Fictions) and the Postmodern*. Basingstroke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. A hard-to-classify piece of postmodern

theory in which the author flirts with fiction and adopts a series of different personae including Rada Rada, Jack O. Lantern, and Black Madonna Durkheim.

What the #$! Do We Know*?! 2005. Dir. Betsy Chasse, William Arntz, and Mark Vicente. 20th Century Fox. This movie—part documentary, part drama—asks some very postmodern questions about reality and how we know it.

Zaretsky, Eli. 2004. *Secrets of the Soul*. New York: Vintage. A social history of the reception of psychoanalysis.

Žižek. 2006. Dir. Astra Taylor. Zeitgeist Films. A documentary film on the Slovenian cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek, whose postmodern synthesis of Marx and Freud has made him as famous as a rock star in Europe.



CHAPTER 3

Studying Social Life: Sociological Research Methods

Humorist Dave Barry, the Pulitzer Prize–winning columnist and author, has written many entertaining articles as a reporter and social commentator. Some of his thoughts on college, however, seem particularly appropriate for this chapter. In one of his most popular essays, Barry advises students not to choose a major that involves "known facts" and "right answers" but rather a subject in which "nobody really understands what anybody else is talking about, and which involves virtually no actual facts" (Barry 1994). For example, sociology:

> For sheer lack of intelligibility, sociology is far and away the number one subject. I sat through hundreds of hours of sociology courses, and read gobs of sociology writing, and I never once heard or read a coherent statement. This is because sociologists want to be considered scientists, so they spend most of their time translating simple, obvious observations into scientific-sounding code. If you plan to major in sociology, you'll have to learn to do the same thing. For example, suppose you have observed that children cry when they fall down. You should write: "Methodological observation of the sociometrical behavior tendencies of prematurated isolates indicates that a causal relationship exists between groundward tropism and lachrimatory, or 'crying' behavior forms." If you can keep this up for fifty or sixty pages, you will get a large government grant.

Although Barry exaggerates a bit, if there weren't some truth to what he is saying, his joke would be meaningless. While sociologists draw much of their inspiration from the natural (or "hard") sciences (such as chemistry and biology) and try to study society in a scientific way, many people still think of sociology as "unscientific" or a "soft" science. In response some sociologists may try too hard to sound scientific and incorporate complicated terminology in their writing.

It is possible, of course, to conduct research and write about it in a clear, straightforward, and even elegant way, as the best sociologists have demonstrated. Contrary to Barry's humorous claims, sociology can be both scientific *and* comprehensible. So let's turn now to a discussion of how sociologists conduct their research, which

SocIndex

Then and Now

1824: The first known example of an opinion poll, a local straw vote conducted by *The Harrisburg Pennsylvanian*, predicts that Andrew Jackson will be elected president

2001: Approximately 49% of people interviewed in a Roper poll agree or somewhat agree that polls are based on sound scientific practice

Here and There

United States: Conversational analysis emerges in the 1960s and 70s as a radical new qualitative research method, focusing on micro-level talk in interaction

China: Sociology as a discipline, abolished by the government in 1952 and reintroduced in the 1980s, largely emphasizes macro-level, quantitative methods like survey research

This and That

27% of sociologists with PhDs are employed in noneducation fields

34% of the work done by sociologists in noneducation institutions is applied research, such as surveys and ethnographies

includes the methods of gathering information and conveying that information to others. For the record, Dave Barry went to Haverford College near Philadelphia, where he majored in English.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

Much like Chapter 2, this chapter on sociological methods seeks to provide you with a set of tools that will help you develop a particular perspective on the social world. They will also help you in the Data Workshops throughout the book, which are designed to give you the experience of conducting the same type of research that professional sociologists do. For this reason, we recommend that you look at this chapter as a sort of "how-to" guide: read through all the "directions" first, recognizing that you will soon be putting each method into practice. Then remember that you have this chapter as a resource for future reference. These methods are your tools for real-world research—it's important that you understand them, but even more important that you get a chance to use them.

An Overview of Research Methods

While theories make hypothetical claims, methods produce data that will support, disprove, or modify those claims. You are already familiar with some methods sociologists use. When you pick up a newspaper or watch the news on TV, you might learn about an opinion poll on the president's popularity, new census figures, or the results of a market research project. These types of surveys usually produce **quantitative** data (numbers), which are easy to transmit to the public: "40 percent of Americans approve of the job being done by President Bush," or "28 percent of Americans use credit cards to pay for regular expenses such as rent or groceries," for example.

You are also familiar with some **qualitative** methods, the focus of this book. Qualitative methods include observation and informal interviews. For example, when you are a new member in a group (such as a sorority or fraternity, a dance class, or a neighbor's party), you often spend part of your time observing the other members closely. What are they saying and doing? What seems important to them? How can I best fit in? Do I even want to fit in? Such a situation is a practical version of what sociologists do in ethnographic research. They observe a group in order to determine the members' norms, values, rules, and meanings. Like sociologists, we also use a qualitative method when we "interview" new friends or potential romantic partners in order to discover their important qualities and beliefs. Although our questions are unsystematic and nonscientific—we don't usually take a list of interview questions with us on a date—they are related to the methods we will consider in this chapter.

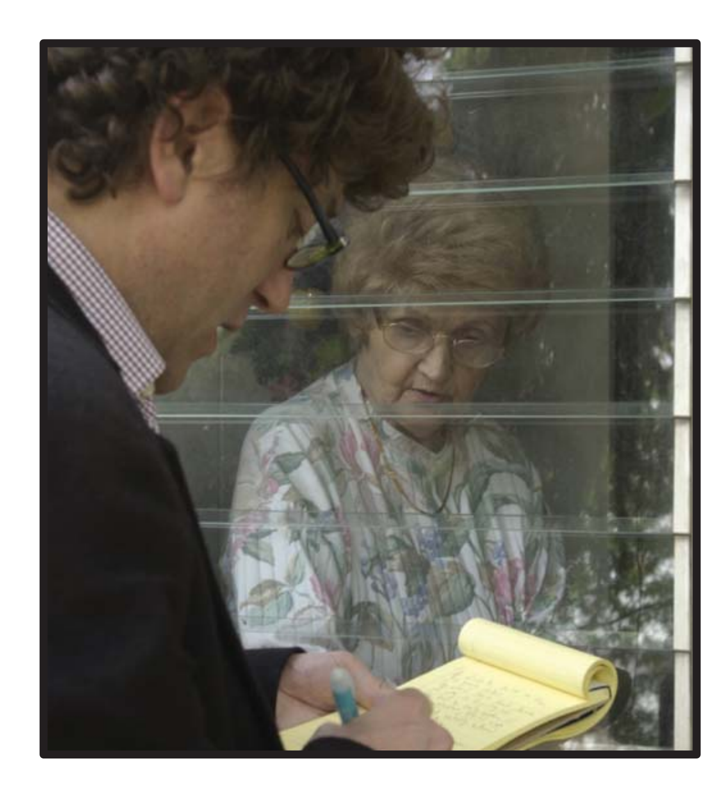
quantitative a type of data that can be converted into numbers, usually for statistical comparison

qualitative a type of data that can't be converted into numbers, usually because they relate to meaning

scientific method a procedure for acquiring knowledge that emphasizes collecting concrete data through observation and experiment

The Scientific Approach

The **scientific method** is the standard procedure for acquiring and verifying empirical (concrete, scientific) knowledge. The scientific method provides researchers with a series of basic steps to follow; over the years, sociologists have updated and modified this model so that it better fits the study of human behaviors. While not every sociologist adheres to



Sociological Methods Take Many Forms They can be quantitative, but they can also include interviews, surveys, and participant observation.



Does Watching Violence on Television Cause Children to Behave Violently? In his famous 1965 study, Albert Bandura supported his hypothesis by observing children who had watched a video of an adult beating a doll behaving similarly toward the doll afterward.

each of the steps in order, the scientific method provides a general plan for conducting research in a systematic way.

1. In the first step the researcher identifies a problem or asks a general question like "Does violent TV lead to violent behavior?" and begins to think about a specific research plan designed to answer that question.
2. Before proceeding, however, a researcher usually does a **literature review** to become thoroughly familiar with all other research done previously on a given topic. This will prevent a researcher from duplicating work that has already been done and may also provide the background upon which to conduct new research.
3. Next the researcher forms a **hypothesis**, a theoretical statement that she thinks will explain the relationship between two phenomena, which are known as **variables**. In the hypothesis "Watching violence on TV causes children to act violently in real life," the two variables are "watching violence on TV" and "acting violently." In short the researcher is saying one variable causes the other. The researcher can use the hypothesis to predict possible outcomes: "If watching violence on TV causes children to act violently in real life, then exposing five-year-olds to violent TV shows will make them more likely to hit the inflatable clown doll placed in the room with them." The researcher must clearly give an **operational definition** to the variables so that she can observe and measure them accurately. For example, there is a wide range of violence on television and in real life. Does "violence" include words as well as actions, a slap as well as murder?
4. In this step the researcher chooses a research design or method. A classic example is to perform an experiment meant to isolate the variables in order to best examine their relationship to one another. Other methods are also available and will be discussed later in the chapter.
5. The researcher then collects the data. In this case the researcher would conduct the experiment by first exposing kids to TV violence, then observing their behavior toward the clown doll. Data might be collected by using video equipment as well as by taking notes.
6. Next the researcher must analyze the data, evaluating the accuracy or inaccuracy of the hypothesis in predicting the outcome. In the real-life experiment this example is based on, the children were more likely to hit the clown doll themselves if they saw the TV actors being rewarded for their violent behavior; if the actors were punished for their behavior, the children were less likely to hit the doll (Bandura 1965).
7. Finally the researcher then disseminates the findings of the experiment in the scientific community (often through presentations at professional meetings and/or publications) as well as among the general public, thus completing the last step in the research process.

One limit of the scientific method is that it can't always distinguish between **correlation** and **causation**. If two variables change in conjunction with each other, or if a change in one seems to lead to a change in the other, they are correlated. Even if they are correlated, though, the change in one variable may not be caused by the change in the other variable. Instead there may be some **intervening variable** that causes the changes in both. The classic example of this is the correlation between ice cream sales and rates of violent crime. As ice cream sales increase, so do rates of violent crime like murder and rape. Does ice cream consumption cause people to act violently? Or do violent actions cause people to buy ice cream? Turns out

literature review a thorough search through previously published studies relevant to a particular topic

hypothesis a theoretical statement explaining the relationship between two or more phenomena

variables one of two or more phenomena that a researcher believes are related and hopes to prove are related through research

operational definition a clear and precise definition of a variable that facilitates its measurement

correlation a relationship between variables in which they change together. May or may not be causal

causation a relationship between variables in which a change in one directly produces a change in the other

intervening variable a third variable, sometimes overlooked, that explains the relationship between two other variables



FIGURE 3.1 Steps of the Scientific Method

it's neither—this is what is known as a **spurious correlation**. Both ice cream sales and violent crime rates are influenced by a third variable: weather. As the temperature climbs, so do people's rates of ice cream purchase and the likelihood that they'll be involved in a violent crime (probably because they are outside for more hours of the day and hence available to each other in a way that makes violent crime possible). Knowing that correlation does not equal causation is important, as it can help us all be more critical consumers of scientific findings.

We are constantly gathering data in order to understand what is true. Philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1962/1970), in fact, argues that truth is relative and dependent on the paradigm through which one sees the world. Paradigms are broad theoretical models about how things work in the social and natural worlds. For example, humans believed for centuries that the universe revolved around the earth. It's easy to understand why. The available data, after all, seemed to support such a theory: we don't feel the earth moving beneath us, and it appears from our vantage point that the stars, sun, and moon rise and set on our horizon. This earth-centered, or geocentric, view of the universe was the basis for all scientific theory until 1543, when the Polish astronomer Nicholas Copernicus proposed that the earth revolved around the sun (Armitage 1951). Using mathematical methods, Copernicus arrived at a new theory, heliocentrism, in which the earth rotates around the sun and on its own axis—thereby accounting for the twenty-four-hour days as well as the four seasons of the year. This caused what Kuhn calls a **paradigm shift**, a major break from the assumptions made by the previous model (1957, 1962/1970). Paradigm shifts occur when new data force new ways of looking at the world. And methods are what generate data.

spurious correlation the appearance of causation produced by an intervening variable

paradigm shift the term used to describe a change in basic assumptions of a particular scientific discipline

Which Method to Use?

Since each sociological method has specific benefits and limitations, each is more appropriate for certain types of research. Thus when a researcher begins a project, one of her most important decisions is which methods to use. Suppose, for example, a sociologist is interested in studying Woodstock, one of the major musical and cultural milestones of the 1960s. Although there are many ways to approach this event, our sociologist wants to study the attendees' experiences. What was it really like to be at Woodstock? What did



What Was It Really Like at Woodstock? You could use many different methodologies to investigate this question, including ethnography, interviews, a survey, existing sources, or an experiment.

it mean to those who were there? What are their interpretations of this iconic moment in hippie culture?

During the event itself the ideal method for studying the festival-goers at Woodstock might have been to assemble a team of researchers trained in participant observation: that is, they would actually be in the thick of things, observing and participating at the same time. They could gather firsthand data on the music, clothes, dancing, drugs, "free love," and so forth. However, the opportunity to conduct an ethnography (written record) of that particular cultural phenomenon has long since passed. What are some other options?

Interviews are a possibility: the researcher could ask Woodstock attendees to recount their experiences. But how would she recruit them? Woodstock-goers live all over the world now, and it might be difficult (and expensive) to track down enough of them to make an interview study feasible. Another problem with interviewing this group: many of them were using drugs during the three-day concert. How did the drugs affect their memories of the experience?

How about a survey? The researcher could certainly send a questionnaire through the mail or by e-mail, and this method would be much less expensive than face-to-face interviews. But here she runs into the same problem as with an interview study: how does she find all these folks? A standard tactic for a survey involves placing an ad in a local newspaper. But an ad in the *New York Times*, for example, or even a community website like Craigslist would draw only a limited number of Woodstock alumni. Also, some people may want to put that part of their lives behind them; if they received this questionnaire in the mail, it might go straight into the trash. Finally, she might encounter the problem of impostors—people who say they were at Woodstock but were really nowhere near it.

What about using existing sources? Plenty has been written about Woodstock over the years. Many firsthand accounts have been published, and there is an abundance of film and photography as well. Our researcher could use these articles to analyze the concert from the perspectives of the participants. These accounts would necessarily be selective, focusing only on particular aspects of the Woodstock experience.

Is it possible to conduct an experiment that replicates the original Woodstock? Some would say that Woodstock '99 was such an experiment and that it failed miserably, with fires, violence, arrests, and acres of mud. However, systematic scientific experiments are different from blatant attempts to cash in on the Woodstock mystique. While the unique conditions of the 1969 gathering cannot be re-created in a lab setting, it is possible to identify some of the defining features of the Woodstock experience and to explore those experimentally. Over a three-day period tens of thousands of strangers came together in a mass gathering, mostly devoid of any official presence (no cops, fences, roads, ticket booths, or porta-potties) and had an almost entirely peaceful experience. How did this happen? Altruism, cooperation, and trust between strangers are some of the measurable group qualities that seem to have been present. An experimenter might be able to create laboratory environments in which subjects participate in activities that highlight one or more of these

qualities—even without the mud, music, and drugs that were part of the original Woodstock experience.

No matter what methodological choice our researcher makes, she will sacrifice some types of information in order to acquire others, and she will trade in one set of advantages and disadvantages for another. Her choices will be guided not only by what she wants to accomplish sociologically but also by the methods she is a competent practitioner of; the time in which she wants to complete the project; the resources available from any funding agencies; and her access to cooperative, qualified people, both as respondents and as research assistants. The rest of this chapter will discuss five methods in detail: ethnography, interviews, surveys, existing sources, and experiments. We will see how various sociologists have used these methods to conduct research on the general topic of "family dynamics."

Ethnographic Methods

Ethnography means "writing [from the Greek *graphos*] culture [*ethnos*]." Ethnographers collect data by producing written records of their observations, with the goal of not only describing the activities they observe and participate in but also understanding what those activities mean to the members of the group they are studying.

One example of an ethnography is Judith Stacey's study of two working-class families in Northern California, *Brave New Families: Stories of Domestic Upheaval in Late Twentieth-Century America* (1990). Stacey's research took the form of **participant observation**. She spent several years with the families of Pam Gama and Dotty Lewison, following them through their daily routines at home and at work, at family gatherings, and in the community at large. She interviewed members of the immediate and extended families and other important people in their lives. She observed the changes that occurred as a result of divorce, remarriage, community activism, and religious participation. Through her participant observation of the Gamas and Lewisons, Stacey was able to provide a detailed snapshot of the changing twentieth-century family—a world in which the nuclear family is often supplemented or supplanted by other types of relationships. Dotty and Pam's step- and ex-relationships, friends, and co-workers, as well as church and community members, all took on some of the functions typically associated with the traditional family. Stacey argues that working-class families, rather than the middle class or intellectuals, are at the forefront of family change. Social critics often comment negatively about the changing family; Stacey's ethnographic research provides support for the notion that changes in family structure can be positive and necessary as well.

ethnography a naturalistic method based on studying people in their own environment in order to understand the meanings they attribute to their activities; also the written work that results from the study

participant observation a methodology associated with ethnography whereby the researcher both observes and becomes a member in a social setting

access the process by which an ethnographer gains entry to a field setting

rapport a positive relationship often characterized by mutual trust or sympathy

Stacey's role changed as situations changed. Sometimes she was purely an observer, watching as family members went about their business, but at other times she was a full participant—lending emotional support to Pam and Dotty as they dealt with such difficult issues as spousal abuse and the tragic death of a child. The roles available for participant observers, then, may differ depending on the particular setting and research involved. The researcher's role in the group is often that of an apprentice or newcomer. Negotiating **access**, as this beginning part of the process is called, is a critical part of ethnographic work. Stacey, for instance, had the advantage of being a woman who accessed the Gama and Lewison families by establishing positive **rapport** with her subjects through working friendships with Pam and Dotty. While being female undoubtedly allowed her entrée to areas that a male fieldworker might have had trouble accessing, it may also have closed off certain avenues that would have been open to a male researcher. In fact, she learned about the male perspective on family life only as conveyed through the women.

Once access is negotiated, research can begin in earnest. Like Judith Stacey, most ethnographers are "overt" about their research roles; that is, they are open about their sociological intentions. Overt research is generally preferred,



Brave New Families In her provocative ethnography, Judith Stacey immersed herself in the lives of several California families while she observed how divorce, remarriage, community activism, and religious participation affected their lives.



Richard Mitchell's *Dancing at Armageddon* In order to learn about militant groups' ideologies, Richard Mitchell had to conceal his identity and use covert methods.

because it eliminates the potential ethical problems of deceit. Sometimes, however, circumstances dictate that researchers take a "covert" role and observe members without letting them know that they are doing research. One researcher who kept his identity secret is Richard Mitchell, who studied militant survivalist groups for many years (2001). In order to be a participant-observer in such groups, Mitchell sometimes had to present himself as an eager apostle, a true believer in the survivalists' paranoid, racist ideologies. Often this meant being surrounded by men who were heavily armed and deeply suspicious of outsiders (Mitchell and Charmaz 1996). However, he also felt that the value of the research was worth the risk, that it was more important than his own personal peril and the ethical objections of those who disapprove of covert research, because it provided insight into a secretive group whose actions could pose a danger to the larger society.

Participant-observers collect data by writing detailed **fieldnotes** every day. These notes describe the activities and interactions of the researcher and the members in as much detail as possible; they become the basis of the data analysis the researcher does later on. Sometimes ethnographers take brief, sketchy notes in the field, writing key words or short quotations in small notebooks, on cocktail napkins, or in the margins of meeting agendas. These jottings can help jog their memories when they sit down at a computer at the end of the day. Sometimes, however, ethnographers must rely on "head notes"—memory alone.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, well known for his work on Indonesian culture and society, coined the term *thick description* to convey the qualities of well-written fieldnotes (1973). It takes more than mere photographic detail to make fieldnotes "thick"; sensitivity to the context and to interactional details such as facial expressions and tone of voice are what enrich what might otherwise be just a list of events. In order to truly understand members' meanings, one has to be immersed in the setting, usually for a sustained period of time (some ethnographers spend years in the field).

fieldnotes detailed notes taken by an ethnographer describing her activities and interactions, which later become the basis of the ethnographic analysis

reflexivity how the identity and activities of the researcher influence what is going on in the field setting

grounded theory an inductive method of generating theory from data by creating categories in which to place data and then looking for relationships between categories

Another issue that participant-observers must consider is that their own presence probably affects the interactions and relationships in the group they are observing, an idea known as **reflexivity**. For example, the gender of the researcher may be important in particular settings, as it was for Stacey in negotiating access. A researcher's personal feelings about the members of a group also come into play. Ethnographers may feel respect, contempt, curiosity, boredom, and other emotions during their time in the field, and these feelings may influence their observations. It is true that other kinds of researchers also have to take their feelings into account. But because ethnographers have such close personal ties to the people they study, the issue of reflexivity is especially important to them.

Analyzing the Data

Ethnographers look for patterns and processes that are revealed in their fieldnotes. In other words, they use an inductive approach: they start by immersing themselves in their fieldnote data and fitting the data into categories, such as "episodes of conflict" or "common vocabulary shared by members." Identifying relationships between these categories then allows ethnographers to build theoretical propositions, a form of analysis known as **grounded theory**.

Advantages and Disadvantages

ADVANTAGES

1. Ethnographies offer a means of studying groups that are often overlooked by other methods (Katz 1997). These include deviant groups such as fight clubs (Jackson Jacobs 2004) and exceptional groups such as elite college athletes

(Adler and Adler 1991). Ethnographic methods excel at telling stories that otherwise might not have been told.

2. Ethnographies can challenge our taken-for-granted notions about groups we thought we knew. For instance, from Stacey's work on what seem like typical working-class families, we learn about the emergence of new family forms and relationships that may come to typify families in the future.

3. The detailed nature of ethnographies can help to reshape the stereotypes we hold about others and on which social policy is often based. A study like Stacey's can have policy consequences because it sheds light on the creative ways that families cope with such demands of everyday life as work, child care, and divorce.

4. Much of the pioneering methodological innovation of the last half-century has come from within the field of ethnography, especially on the issue of reflexivity and researcher roles in the field.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Ethnographies suffer from a lack of **replicability**, the ability of another researcher to repeat or replicate the study. Repeating a study in order to test the validity of its results is an important element of the scientific method, but because of the unique combinations of people, timing, setting, and researcher role, no one can ever undertake the same study twice.

2. A major critique has to do with ethnographies' degree of **representativeness**, whether they apply to anything larger than themselves. What is the value of studying relatively small groups of people if one cannot then say that these groups represent parts of the society at large? Though Stacey's work focused on just the Gamas and Lewisons, her conclusions were supposed to apply to working-class families in general.

3. Ethnographers must also be wary of **bias**. There is always a possibility that prejudice or favor can slip into the research process. Not all researchers are transparent about their own agendas. We need to keep in mind how a researcher's own values and opinions might affect his research and analysis.

replicability research that can be repeated, and thus verified, by other researchers later

representativeness the degree to which a particular studied group is similar to, or represents, any part of the larger society

bias an opinion held by the researcher that might affect the research or analysis



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Observing and Describing Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

While producing fieldnotes may sound fairly easy (don't we all know how to describe the things we've observed?), it turns out to be one of the most grueling forms of data collection in the social sciences. Why? Because thick description is a much more demanding accomplishment than the description you're used to providing in everyday conversation. It requires a rigorous consciousness of what is going on around you while it is happening and a strenuous effort to recall those goings-on after leaving the field and returning to your computer.

This Data Workshop is a practicum in thick description. To make things a little easier for you, we have separated the verbal and the visual so that you can concentrate on one kind of description at a time. But in your future ethnographic work, you'll be writing fieldnotes that describe both verbal and nonverbal behavior at once.

Observation: First, for 10 to 15 minutes, listen to (eavesdrop on) a conversation whose participants you can't see. They might be sitting behind you on a bus or in a restaurant—you're close enough to hear them but positioned so that you can't see them. Then, for 10 to 15 minutes, observe a conversation you can't hear—one taking place, for example, on the other side of the campus quad. Even though you can't hear what's being said, you can see the interaction as it takes place.

Written Description: Write an extremely detailed description of each conversation. Describe the participants and the setting, and include your ideas about what you think is going on and what you think you know about the participants. Try to describe everything you heard or saw in order to support any conclusions you draw. For each 10- to 15-minute observation period, your written description should be three to four typed pages.

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Choose a partner from your class and exchange your written descriptions with your partner. As you read through your partner's descriptions, mark with a star (*) the passages where you can see and hear clearly the things your partner describes. Circle the passages that contain evaluative words (like "angry" or "sweet") or summaries of action or conversation rather than detailed description (like "They argued about who would pay the bill"). And place a question mark

next to the passages where you are left feeling like you would like to know more. Your partner will do this with your description as well, and you can discuss your responses to each other's work. Finally, as a class, use your discussions to develop a group consensus about what constitutes good descriptive detail. This is the kind of detail ethnographers strive to produce in their fieldnotes every day.

- *Option 2 (formal)*: Turn in your written descriptions to your instructor for individual feedback.

Interviews

Sociologists use **interviews**—face-to-face, information-seeking conversations—to gather information directly from research subjects, or **respondents**. When researchers conduct interviews, they try to do so systematically and with a more scientific approach than is typically seen in more casual television or newspaper interviews.

Sometimes interviews are the only method used in a research project, but sociologists may also combine interviews with other methods such as participant observation or analysis of existing sources. Closely related to interviews are surveys, which we will consider in the next section. Interviews, however, are always conducted by the researcher, whereas surveys may also be taken independently by the respondent.

When using interviews to collect data about a particular question or project, sociologists must identify a **target population**, the larger group they wish to generalize about, and then select a **sample**, or smaller group who are representative of the larger group. The number of possible respondents depends on the type of study, the nature of the questions, and the amount of time and staff available. In most research studies, interviews can be administered to a limited number of people, so the scope of such projects is usually smaller than for other methods such as surveys. The researcher must get implied or **informed consent** from those participating—in other words, respondents must know what they are getting into and explicitly agree to participate.

interviews face-to-face, information-seeking conversation, sometimes defined as a conversation with a purpose

respondent someone from whom a researcher solicits information

target population the entire group about which a researcher would like to be able to generalize

sample the part of the population that will actually be studied

informed consent a safeguard through which the researcher makes sure that respondents are freely participating and understand the nature of the research

closed-ended question a question asked of a respondent that imposes a limit on the possible responses



The Second Shift In her groundbreaking book, Arlie Hochschild interviewed working women and their partners to learn about the time-binds that they face as they balance work, family, and running a household.

Arlie Hochschild (Hochschild and Machung 1989) used interviews to conduct her landmark study on parents in two-career families, *The Second Shift*. In this book Hochschild looks at how couples handle the pressures of working at a job and then coming home to what she calls "the second shift"—doing housework and taking care of children. Hochschild, who was herself in a two-career family, wanted to find out how couples were dealing with changing family roles in light of the fact that more women had entered the workforce. Were women able to juggle all their responsibilities, and to what extent were men helping their wives in running the household? Hochschild and her assistants interviewed 50 couples in two-career marriages (many were interviewed more than once) and 45 other people who were also a part of the respondents' social arrangements, such as babysitters, day-care providers, and teachers.

When conducting an interview, how do you know what to ask? Composing good questions is one of the most difficult parts of interviewing. Most interviewers use many different questions, covering a range of issues related to the project. Questions may be closed- or open-ended. A **closed-ended question** imposes a limit on the possible response: for example, "Are you for or against couples living together

open-ended question a question asked of a respondent that allows the answer to take whatever form the respondent chooses

leading questions questions that predispose a respondent to answer in a certain way

double-barreled questions questions that attempt to get at multiple issues at once, and so tend to receive incomplete answers

survey a method based on questionnaires that are administered to a sample of respondents selected from a target population

before they are married?" An **open-ended question**, on the other hand, allows for a wide variety of responses: "What do you think about couples living together before they are married?"

Researchers must be careful to avoid biased or **leading questions**, those that predispose a respondent to answer in a certain way. Overly complex questions are a problem, as are **double-barreled questions**, those that involve too many different issues at one time. It is also important to be aware of any ambiguous or emotional language that might confuse or spark an emotional reaction on the part of the respondent. Asking a single parent how difficult her life is will elicit data about difficulties, but not about the joys, of parenthood. More neutral language ("Tell me about the pluses and minuses of single parenthood") is preferable.

Analyzing the Data

Once the interviews have been conducted, they are usually transcribed so that researchers can analyze them in textual form—they can sort through the material looking for patterns of similarities and differences among the answers. Some researchers may use computer programs designed to help analyze such data; others do it "by hand." For her analysis Hochschild categorized the types of household chores done by men and women and quantified the amount of time spent daily and weekly on those chores. She then categorized couples as "traditional," "transitional," or "egalitarian," depending on how their household labor was divided.

Advantages and Disadvantages

ADVANTAGES

1. Interviews allow respondents to speak in their own words; they can reveal their own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, internal states that would not necessarily be accessible by any other means. In so many other instances, it is the researcher who tells the story. A book like *The Second Shift*, which features direct quotations from interview transcripts, provides the reader with an authentic and intimate portrait of the lives of married couples. Hochschild was able to get at the different subjective experiences of the women and men in her study and to see how each of them perceived the reality of his or her situation.
2. Interviews may help the researcher dispel certain preconceptions and discover issues that might have otherwise been overlooked. For example, before Hochschild began her project, many other studies had already been conducted on families with two working parents, but few seemed to examine in depth the real-life dilemma of the two-career family that Hochschild herself was experiencing.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Respondents are not always forthcoming or truthful. Sometimes they are difficult to talk to, and at other times they may try too hard to be helpful. Although an adept interviewer will be able to encourage meaningful responses, she can never take at face value what any respondent might say. To counteract this problem, Hochschild observed a few of the families she had interviewed. She saw that what these couples said about themselves in interviews was sometimes at odds with how they acted at home.
2. Another problem is representativeness: whether the conclusions of interview research can be applied to larger groups. Because face-to-face interviewing is time consuming, interviews are rarely used with large numbers of people. Can findings from a small sample be generalized to a larger population? In regard to Hochschild's research, can we say that interviews with 50 couples, although carefully selected by the researcher, give a true picture of the lives of all two-career families? Hochschild answered this question by comparing selected information about her 50 couples with data from a huge national survey.

Surveys

How many times have you filled out a survey? Probably more times than you realize. If you responded to the last U.S. government census, if you have ever been solicited by a polling agency to give your opinion about a public issue, or if you have ever been asked to evaluate your college classes and instructors at the end of a semester, you were part of somebody's survey research.

Surveys are questionnaires that are administered to a sample of respondents selected from a target population. One of the earliest sociologists to use informal surveys was Karl Marx. In the 1880s, Marx sent questionnaires to over 25,000 French workers in an effort to determine the extent to which they were exploited by employers. Although we don't know how many

surveys were returned to him or what the individual responses were, the project clearly influenced his writing, which focused heavily on workers' rights.

Today, many universities have research centers devoted to conducting survey research. One such center is the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University in New Jersey, where sociologists have been engaged in studying what they call "The State of Our Unions: The Social Health of Marriage in America" over the past several years. Researchers have asked young adults in their twenties about their attitudes toward dating, cohabitation, marriage, and parenthood.

Survey research tends to be macro and quantitative in nature: it looks at large-scale social patterns and employs statistics and other mathematical means of analysis. Social scientists who use surveys must follow specific procedures in order to produce valid results. They need a good questionnaire and wise sample selection. Most surveys are composed of closed-ended questions, or those for which all possible answers are provided. Answers may be as simple as a "yes" or "no," or more complex. A common type of questionnaire is based on the **Likert scale**, a format in which respondents can choose along a continuum—from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," for example. Some questionnaires also offer such options as "don't know" or "doesn't apply." Surveys may include open-ended questions, or those to which the respondents provide their own answers. These are often formatted as write-in questions and can provide researchers with more qualitative data.

Both questions and possible (given) answers on a survey must be written in such a way as to avoid confusion or ambiguity. While this is also true for interviews, it is even more important for surveys because the researcher is not generally present to clarify any misunderstandings. Common pitfalls are leading questions; **negative questions**, which ask respondents what they don't think instead of what they do; and double-barreled questions. Bias can also be a problem if questions or answers are worded in a slanted fashion.

The format of a questionnaire is also important. Something as simple as the order in which the different items are presented can influence responses. Mentioning an issue like divorce or infidelity in earlier questions can mean that respondents are thinking about it when they answer later questions, and as a result their answers might be different than they would otherwise have been. Questionnaires should be clear and easy to follow. Once a questionnaire is constructed, it is a good idea to have a small group pretest it to help eliminate flaws and make sure it is clear and comprehensible.

Another important element in survey research is sampling techniques. As with interviews, the researcher must identify the specific population she wishes to study: for example, "all married couples with children living at home" or "all young adults between the ages of 20 and 29." By using correct sampling techniques, researchers can survey a smaller number of respondents and then make accurate inferences about the larger population. For example, in the National Marriage Project study, researchers surveyed a statistically **representative sample** of 1,003 young adults. In quantitative research, social scientists use **probability sampling**, in which the sample group mathematically represents the larger population. Researchers might generate a **simple random sample**, where each member of the larger population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. Or they might use more sophisticated manipulating or **weighting** techniques, in which the proportion of certain variables such as race, class, gender, or age in the sample group is more closely representative of the larger population.

An increasing number of researchers have recently turned to utilizing the internet to help conduct surveys (Best and Krueger 2004, Sue and Ritter 2007). The internet has opened up new possibilities for reaching respondents as more and more people have online access. While online surveys promise a certain amount of ease and cost effectiveness, they also present researchers with significant challenges, especially in terms of scientific sampling.

Likert scale a way of organizing categories on a survey question so that the respondent can choose an answer along a continuum

negative questions survey questions that ask respondents what they don't think instead of what they do

representative sample a sample taken so that findings from members of the sample group can be generalized to the whole population

probability sampling any sampling scheme in which the probability of selecting any given unit is known

simple random sample a particular type of probability sample in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected

weighting techniques for manipulating the sampling procedure so that the sample more closely resembles the larger population

response rate the number or percentage of surveys completed by respondents and returned to researchers

Analyzing the Data

In order for a survey to be considered valid, there must be a sufficiently high **response rate**. Even if only half of the group actually returned the completed surveys, that would be considered a very good result. Once the surveys are returned, the researchers begin the process of tabulating and analyzing the data. Responses are usually coded or turned into numerical figures so that they can be more easily analyzed

reliability the consistency of a question or measurement tool; the degree to which the same questions will produce similar answers

confidentiality the assurance that no one other than the researcher will know the identity of a respondent

validity the accuracy of a question or measurement tool; the degree to which a researcher is measuring what he thinks he is measuring

pilot study a small study carried out to test the feasibility of a larger one

on a computer. Researchers often want to understand the relationship between certain variables; for instance, what is the effect of "infidelity" on "divorce"? There are many computer programs, such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), that can help researchers perform complicated calculations and reach conclusions about relationships. This is where advanced statistical skills become an important part of social analysis.

Advantages and Disadvantages

ADVANTAGES

1. Survey research is one of the best methods to use for gathering original data on a population that is too large to study by other means, such as by direct observation or interviewing. Surveys can be widely distributed, reaching a large number of people. Researchers can then generalize their findings to an even larger population.
2. It is also relatively quick and economical and can provide a vast amount of data. Online surveys now promise a way to gain access to even greater numbers of people at even less cost.
3. In general, survey research is comparatively strong on **reliability**. This means that we can be sure that the same kind of data is collected each time the same question is asked.
4. There is less concern about interviewer or observer bias entering into the research process. Respondents may feel more comfortable giving candid answers to sensitive questions because they answer the questions in private and are usually assured of the **confidentiality** of their responses.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Survey research generally lacks qualitative data that might better capture the social reality the researcher wishes to examine. Because most survey questions don't allow the respondent to qualify his answer, they don't allow for a full range of expression and may not accurately reflect the true meaning of the respondent's thoughts. For example, asking a respondent to choose one reason from a list of reasons for divorce might not provide a full explanation for the failure of that person's marriage. The reasons may have been both financial and emotional, but the survey may not provide the respondent with the ability to convey this. Adding write-in questions is one way to minimize this disadvantage.
2. In general, since not all respondents are honest in self-reports, survey research is comparatively weak on **validity**. For example, a respondent may be ashamed about his divorce and may not want to reveal the true reasons behind it to a stranger on a questionnaire.
3. Often there are problems with the sampling process, especially when respondents self-select to participate, that make generalizability more difficult. Gathering data online only exacerbates this problem. If a survey seeking to know the true incidence of domestic violence in the population is administered only to the members of a domestic violence support group, then the incidence of domestic violence will be 100 percent—misrepresenting the incidence in the larger population.
4. It's possible that survey research will be used to support a point of view rather than for pure scientific discovery—for example, a manufacturer of SUVs may report that 90 percent of all American families wish they had a larger car. We will consider this limitation later, in the section on nonacademic uses of research methods.

DATA WORKSHOP



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Comparative Media Usage Patterns

Recent studies have shown that the average American spends about nine hours a day using some type of media—computers, TV, iPods, and so on (Papper et al. 2005). That's over half of our waking hours each day. With the media playing such an increasingly important role in society, researchers continue to study their impact across a wide range of issues. In this Data Workshop you will be conducting your own research about media usage in everyday life. Your task is twofold. First you will get some practice constructing and administering surveys as a method of data collection. Second you will do a preliminary analysis of your data and discover something for yourself about the patterns of media usage among those who participate in your **pilot study**.

There is much more to the picture than just the number of hours Americans spend using media; we want to understand more about the role the media play in these people's lives. What do you consider an interesting or important aspect of media usage to study? Here are some suggestions.

What kind of media are people using—books, television, radio, iPods, CDs, DVDs, the internet, video games? Do different groups prefer different types of media? How many different kinds of devices do people have access to or own? How much money do individuals spend on media-related activities? How does age, education, gender, ethnicity, or religion influence media usage? What else do people do while using media—do they work, eat, clean, drive, exercise, study, or even sleep?

Now come up with more of your own questions!

Because there are a variety of ways of doing such a project, you should choose just how you would like to customize your research. Since this is only a preliminary effort at survey research, the project will have to be somewhat limited. Nonetheless, try to follow the necessary steps in the research process in order to be as scientific as possible.

1. Decide what aspects of media use you want to study.
2. Select a sample of the population you wish to study (teenagers, minority groups, people with a college degree, and so on).
3. Write and format your survey questionnaire.
4. Administer the questionnaire to the individuals in your sample.
5. Analyze the data collected in the survey.
6. Present your findings.

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Working in small groups of three to four students, begin designing a survey project by discussing steps 1 and 2 above. Members of the group can then collaborate on step 3. If time allows they can play the role of a pilot group and test the questionnaire by taking the survey themselves as in step 4. Finally the group should discuss what needs to be changed or what else needs to be accomplished to complete an actual survey.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Design your own survey research project, completing all of the above steps. Choose at least five to eight people to be included in your sample. After administering the questionnaire, write a three- to four-page essay discussing the research process and your preliminary findings.



Alice Miller's *For Your Own Good* By analyzing historical sources and child-rearing guides, Miller argued that some of the methods we use to raise children, which we accept as normal and ordinary, can create seriously aberrant individuals as well as regular folks.

Existing Sources

Nearly all sociologists use **existing sources** when they approach a particular research question. For instance, social demography uses statistical data to study the size, composition, growth, and distribution of human populations (Fox 1997). The original data used in such research are often collected by social scientists other than the researcher and by government agencies such as census bureaus and public health departments. In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau makes some of its data available to the public on its website, Census.gov, to help you analyze family size, income levels, or other relevant questions.

Other sociologists use what are called **comparative and historical methods**,

existing sources any data that have already been collected and are available for future research

comparative and historical methods methods that use existing sources to study relationships between elements of society in various regions and time periods

which seek to understand relationships between elements of society in various regions and time periods. These sociologists often analyze cultural artifacts, such as literature, paintings, newspapers, and photography (Bauer and Gaskell 2000). As an example, Alice Miller consulted child-rearing manuals and family records for her book *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence* (1990) in order to investigate the childhood experiences of several notorious German historical figures, including Adolf Hitler. Miller found that Hitler was the product of a fairly traditional child rearing, with traditional gender-role socialization and disciplinary practices. Her findings force us to acknowledge that seemingly "normal" child-rearing practices have the potential to create someone like Hitler—that it is not always the exceptions but the rules themselves that can make a monster. Miller's use of existing records allowed her to gain insight into not only the development of an individual personality but also the structure of an entire society and the role that society played in creating one of the twentieth century's most malevolent individuals.

Consulting existing data can be somewhat less involved than collecting original data (and it can be especially helpful to students, who usually don't have the resources to collect original data themselves). Researchers can generally find survey, census, or other historical information on the internet or obtain it from the social scientists or government bureaus that conducted the original studies. New technology is also making more material more readily available to researchers. We now have unprecedented access to digital media (books, magazines, articles, e-mail, web pages, music, photos, TV programs, videos, and films) that are regularly retrievable through the internet. While all of these materials may have been created for another purpose, they can constitute valuable data to be used in social research.

Analyzing the Data

After obtaining their data, researchers must decide which analytic tools will be best suited to their research questions. Survey and census data are generally subjected to statistical analysis: researchers posit a particular relationship between variables and then employ mathematical manipulations to test it (Fox 1997). For instance, a researcher might want to look at the relationship between a woman's age and her likely marital status. In 2006, *Newsweek* magazine revisited a controversial article written twenty years earlier, "The Marriage Crunch," that reported that college-educated women over the age of 40 had less than a 3 percent chance of getting married. After reviewing new census data, *Newsweek* had to revise that number to more than 40 percent (McGinn 2006).

content analysis a method in which researchers identify and study specific variables—such as words—in a text, image, or media message

Content analysis is a method in which researchers count the number of times specific variables—such as words—appear in a text, image, or media message. They then conduct tests that will explain the variables and relationships between them. For example, content analysis shows that the roles women play on television are of lower status than men's, with women more likely to be portrayed as housewives, mothers, secretaries, and nurses, while men are doctors, judges, celebrities, and athletes in addition to being husbands and fathers (Kolbe and Langenfeld 1993).

Advantages and Disadvantages

ADVANTAGES

1. Researchers are able to work with information they could not possibly obtain for themselves. Census bureaus, for example, collect information about entire national populations (family size, income, and occupational and residential patterns), something an individual researcher has neither the time nor funds to do. In addition, existing data analysis can be a convenient way for sociologists to pool their resources; one researcher can take data collected by another for his own project, increasing what we can learn from those data.

2. Using sources such as newspapers, political speeches, and cultural artifacts, sociologists are able to learn about many social worlds, in different time periods, they would never be able to enter themselves—for example, preserved letters and diaries from the early 1800s have allowed researchers to analyze the experiences of wives and mothers on the American frontier (Peavy and Smith 1998).

3. Researchers can use the same data to replicate projects that have been conducted before, which is a good way to test findings for reliability or to see changes across time.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Researchers drawing on existing sources often seek to answer questions that the original authors did not have in mind. If you were interested in the sex lives of those frontier women in the early 1800s, for example, you would be unlikely to find any clear references in their letters or diaries.

2. Similarly, content analysis, although it can describe the messages inherent in the media, does not illuminate how such messages are interpreted. So we can say that women's



In Relationships

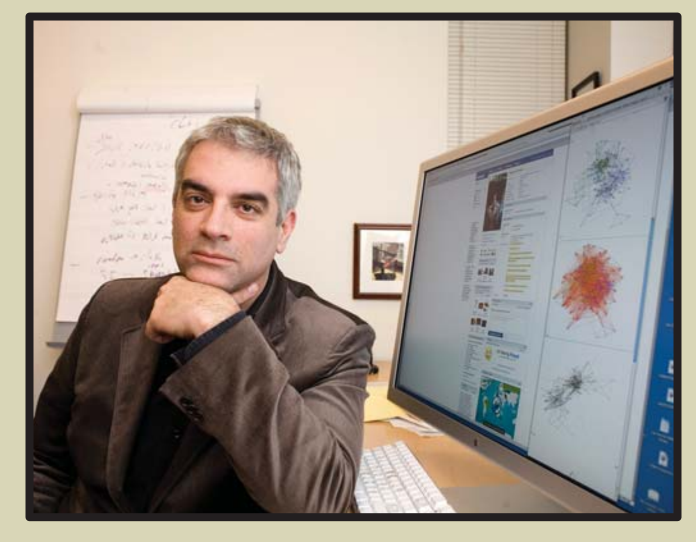
Social Networking Sites as Sources of Data

While sociologists interested in studying interpersonal relationships use a wide variety of archival materials, the internet has created whole new ways of conducting research. Letters, journals, and diaries have always been a rich source of data but ones that have not usually been unavailable until many years after they were produced. On the other hand, social networking websites like Facebook and MySpace create a treasure-trove of data that can be accessed unobtrusively in real time. Given that Facebook is the sixth most visited site on the internet and, unlike most websites, is full of sociologically fascinating phenomena, it's not surprising to find that numerous researchers are using Facebook as a source of data to study such issues as relationships, identity, self-esteem, and popularity.

One of the most ambitious projects has been launched by Nicholas Christakis and Jason Kaufman of Harvard and Andreas Wimmer of UCLA. Their data consist of all the publicly available Facebook profiles of an entire class at an anonymous East Coast university from their freshman to senior years. These data will allow the researchers to examine the relationship "between patterns of social affiliation and aesthetic proclivities" (Kaufman 2008). In other words, they will be able to look at the relationship between the number and type of friends someone has and the type of books, music, and movies they like.

Preliminary results have both good and bad news. The bad news is that online social networks seem to look a lot like social networks established through traditional, real-life, face-to-face contact (or "meatspace," as it is called). Specifically, people's networks on Facebook tend to exhibit "homophily"; that is, people tend to be Facebook friends with other people like them, especially in terms of race and gender. The good news is this might indicate that online relationships are quite real and therefore confer the same benefits as traditional social networks. In some ways this isn't surprising. Increasingly, an individual's internet profile is simply an extension of her everyday life.

For researchers Facebook is especially exciting because it offers a data set rich enough to test ideas that up to now have only been theorized about. As Harvard sociologist Nicholas Christakis points out, concepts about how social networks function were "first described by Simmel 100 years ago. . . . He just theorized about it 100 years ago, but he didn't have the data. Now we can engage that data" (Rosenbloom 2007).



How Might Facebook Be a Source for Sociological Data? Nicholas Christakis uses Facebook to study how people form social relationships.

But social networking websites do more than just provide researchers with new data to answer old questions; they also connect friends and family in new ways. Young people use the "relationship status" feature of Facebook or MySpace as the new standard for evaluating dating; they aren't really a couple until they change their status to "in a relationship." And Facebook has also changed the ways that families interact. The extended family, which is often now separated geographically, is more easily reunited online. Ever since Facebook became available to users in the general community (it says "Everyone Can Join" right on the home page), college students have increasingly seen their parents, and even their grandparents, signing up to stay in touch.

roles on television have lower status than men's, but additional research would be required to identify the effects of these images on viewers.

Experimental Methods

Unlike ethnographies, interviews, surveys, or existing sources, **experiments** actually closely resemble the scientific method with which we began this chapter. You might associate experiments with laboratory scientists in white coats, but experimental research methods are also used by social scientists, especially those who are interested in such issues as group power dynamics, racial discrimination, and gender socialization. Experiments take place not only in laboratories but also in corporate boardrooms and even on street corners.

When sociologists conduct experiments, they start with two basic goals. First they strive to develop precise tools with which to observe, record, and measure their data. Second they attempt to **control** for all possible variables except the one under investigation: they regulate everything except the variable they're interested in so that they can draw clearer conclusions about what caused that variable to change (if it did).

For instance, a researcher interested in divorce may want to investigate whether marriage counseling actually helps couples stay together. He would recruit couples for the experiment and divide them into two groups, making sure that members of each group were similar in terms of age, income, education, and religion as well as length of time married. One group, the **experimental group**, would receive marriage counseling, while the other, the **control group**, would not. The **independent variable** (factor that is predicated to cause change) is marriage counseling. The **dependent variable** (factor that is changed by the independent variable) is the chance of staying married or getting divorced. In such an experiment the researcher could compare the two groups and then make conclusions about whether marriage counseling leads to more couples staying together or more couples getting divorced or has no impact at all.

experiments formal tests of specific variables and effects, performed in a controlled setting where all aspects of the situation can be controlled

control in an experiment, the process of regulating all factors except for the independent variable

experimental group the part of a test group that receives the experimental treatment

control group the part of a test group that is allowed to continue without intervention so that it can be compared with the experimental group

independent variable factor that is predicted to cause change

dependent variable factor that is changed by the independent variable

Another area in which sociological experiments have been conducted is gender-role socialization in families. Research has shown that a child's earliest exposure to what it means to be a boy or girl comes from parents and other caregivers. Boy and girl infants are treated differently by adults—from the way they're dressed to the toys they're given to play with—and are expected to act differently (Thorne 1993). In one experiment adult subjects were asked to play with a small baby, who was dressed in either pink or blue. The subjects assumed the gender of the infant by the color of its clothes and acted accordingly. When they thought it was a boy (blue), they handled the baby less gently and talked in a louder voice, saying things like "Aren't you a big, strong boy?" When they thought it was a girl (pink), they held the baby closer to themselves and spoke more softly: "What a sweet little girl!" From this experiment we can see how gender influences the way that we perceive and interact with others from a very early age.

Sociologists sometimes also use quasi-experimental methods when they study ethnic and gender discrimination in housing, employment, or policing (McIntyre et al. 1980; Brief et al. 1995; Charles 2001). In such studies, individuals who were similar in all respects except for ethnicity or gender were asked to interview for the same jobs, apply for the same mortgage loans, or engage in some other activity. As in the pink-and-blue baby experiment, people who had exactly the same qualifications were treated differently based on their race and gender, with whites and men given better jobs or mortgage rates and women and minorities given inferior jobs or rates—or none at all. Through such studies researchers are able to observe behaviors that may indicate discrimination or unequal treatment.

Analyzing the Data

On the whole, data analysis for experimental sociology tends to be quantitative rather than qualitative because the main goal of an experiment is to isolate a variable and explore the degree to which this variable affects a particular social situation (Smith 1990). The quantitative techniques for analyzing data range from straightforward statistical analyses to complex mathematical modeling.

Advantages and Disadvantages

ADVANTAGES

1. Experiments give sociologists a way to manipulate and control the social environment they seek to understand.



What Does It Mean to Be a Boy or a Girl? In Barrie Thorne's experiment, she asked adults to play with babies dressed in either blue or pink. Thorne found that people treated the baby differently depending on whether they thought it was a girl or a boy.

They can be designed so that there is a minimal amount of outside interference. Researchers can also select participants who have exactly the characteristics they want to explore, such as the babies and adults in the gender socialization experiment.

2. Experimental methods are especially appropriate for researchers who are developing theories about the way the social world operates: a researcher can construct a model of the social situation she is interested in and watch as it unfolds before her, without any of the unpredictable intrusions of the real world. For instance if she wants to study what makes bystanders want to intervene, this might be easier to measure in a laboratory setting than among strangers on a busy public street.
3. Much like physics experiments, highly controlled sociological experiments can theoretically be repeated—they have replicability—so that findings can be tested more than once. An experiment such as the pink-and-blue baby study could easily be performed again and again to gauge historical and cultural changes in gender socialization. Ethnographies and surveys, on the other hand, are almost impossible to repeat in any reliable way.

DISADVANTAGES

Achieving distance from the messy realities of the social world is also the major weakness with sociological experiments. Although experiments can be useful for the development of theory and for explaining the impact of isolated variables, they are generally not very effective for describing more complex processes and interactions. By definition, experiments seek to eliminate elements that will have an unforeseen effect.

Issues in Sociological Research

As sociologists we don't conduct our research in a cultural vacuum. In our professional as well as personal lives, all our actions have consequences, and we must be aware of how the things we do affect others. For this reason any introduction to sociological methods is incomplete without a discussion of three topics: the nonacademic uses of sociological research; values, objectivity, and reactivity in the research process; and the importance of ethics in conducting social research.

Nonacademic Uses of Research Methods

The research methods discussed in this chapter are frequently applied outside the field of sociology. The U.S. Census Bureau, for example, has been taking a survey of the total population once every 10 years since 1790. The census attempts to reach every person residing in the country and makes reports available on a wide range of social, demographic, and economic features. Many government decisions, from where to build a new school or hospital to where to install a new stoplight, are made using demographic data from the census and other major surveys.

Sociological research methods are also used by private organizations such as political campaign offices and news agencies. You are probably familiar with polls (another form of survey research) conducted by organizations like Gallup, Zogby, and Roper. And you have certainly seen the results of

election polls, which indicate the candidates or issues voters are likely to support. Polls, however, do not just reflect public opinion; they can also be used to shape it. Not all of them are conducted under strict scientific protocols. Whenever you hear poll results, try to learn who commissioned the poll and determine whether they are promoting (or opposing) any particular agenda.

Businesses and corporations have turned to sociological research in order to better understand the human dynamics within their companies. Some ethnographers, for instance, have studied organizational culture and reported their findings to executives. Edgar Schein (1997) is often referred to as an industrial ethnographer because he conducts fieldwork in business settings in order to help management identify and deal with dilemmas in the workplace such as how to motivate workers. Many of the experimental "games" developed by sociological researchers can be put to use in the business world to build teams, train employees, or even conduct job interviews. During a corporate retreat, for example, employees might be asked to participate in an obstacle or ropes course, in which they have to work together in order to succeed. By observing the strategies participants use, an employer might learn how task-oriented networks are formed, how leaders are chosen, or how cooperation emerges under pressure. Similarly, experimental games that require subjects to budget imaginary money or communicate an idea in a round of charades may offer insight into how social groups operate or may identify the most effective communicators from a pool of applicants. These experiments clearly benefit the corporation; do they help workers as well?

Market research is perhaps the most common of all non-academic uses of sociological methods. In order to be successful, most companies will engage in some sort of study of the marketplace, either through their own internal sales and marketing departments or by hiring an outside consultant. The efforts of all these companies to understand the buying public have created a multi-billion-dollar marketing and advertising industry. If you've ever filled out a product warranty card after making a purchase, clicked "yes" on a pop-up dialog box to accept "cookies" from a website, or cast a vote for your favorite contestants on *Dancing with the Stars*, then someone has gathered data about your tastes and habits. It is important to note, however, that not all market studies, in fact probably very few, meet the rigorous standards that are otherwise applied to "scientific" research. Remember, too, that the bottom line for any company that uses market research is the desire to sell you their products or services. Just how well do these marketers know you already?

value-free sociology an ideal whereby researchers identify facts without allowing their own personal beliefs or biases to interfere

basic research the search for knowledge without any agenda or desire to use that knowledge to effect change

applied research research designed to allow the researcher to use what is learned to create some sort of change

objectivity impartiality, the ability to allow the facts to speak for themselves

Values, Objectivity, and Reactivity

It's important to recognize that scientific research is done by human beings, not robots. Humans have flaws, prejudices, and blind spots, and all of these things can affect the way we conduct research.

VALUES Like biological or physical scientists, most sociologists believe that they should not allow their personal beliefs to influence their research. The classic sociological statement on neutrality comes from Max Weber (1925/1946), who, in his essay "Science as a Vocation," coined the phrase **value-free sociology** to convey the idea that in doing research sociologists need to separate facts from their own individual values. Although most sociologists have agreed with this ideal, some have challenged the notion of value-free sociology. For instance, some Marxist researchers believe it is appropriate to combine social research and social action. For them the study of society is intimately linked to a commitment to actively solve social problems. On the other hand some symbolic interactionists, like David Matza (1969), believe that the very intention of changing the world prohibits a researcher from understanding that world. The question of whether sociologists should engage only in **basic research**, which is justified as the search for knowledge for its own sake, or rather engage in **applied research**, which requires putting into action what is learned, continues to be debated within the discipline.

Despite the safeguards built into research methodologies, there are still opportunities for bias, or personal preferences, to subtly influence how the work is done. For example a researcher with strong pro-life beliefs might refuse to ask survey questions on topics such as abortion—or might try to influence respondents into changing their opinions on the subject. Bias can infiltrate every part of the research process—from identifying a project to selecting a sample, from the wording of questions to the analysis and write-up of the data. The effects of bias are very difficult to avoid.

OBJECTIVITY The notion of **objectivity**, or impartiality, plays a fundamental role in scientific practice. As far back as Auguste Comte, sociologists have maintained that they could study society rationally and objectively. If a researcher is rational and objective, then he should be able to observe reality, distinguish actual facts from mental concepts, and



Commercial Ethnography

Recently advertisers have become interested in the complex relationships between people and products and are looking to ethnographic methods to help them understand these relationships. Companies are hiring commercial ethnographers to learn how ordinary citizens bathe, dress, make breakfast, drive to work, do laundry, or flip hamburgers on their backyard grill—all in order to understand how consumers relate to various products. While Nissan Motors was developing the Infiniti line, for example, the company used ethnographic market research to help them understand the differences between Japanese and American perceptions of luxury. That's right—they drove around with people and talked to them about their cars! Nissan found that to Americans, high-end goods are more valuable if their lavish features are visible. This is in contrast to the Japanese concept of luxury, which values simplicity and hidden charm. Understanding these differences allowed Nissan to successfully redesign the Infiniti line to be more attractive to American buyers; other automakers realized the benefits of ethnographic market research and followed in Nissan's footsteps (Osborne 2002).

Some commercial ethnographers, known as "cool hunters," search for the newest, hippest trends in popular culture. Look-Look, a Hollywood trend-forecasting firm, recruits "youth correspondents" and amateur photographers in cities around the world as part of its "living research" strategy. Founded by Dee Dee Gordon and Sharon Lee, Look-Look counts on these correspondents to provide information on the latest trends in music, fashion, technology, and hip activities and hangouts. Says Lee, "We look for kids who are ahead of the pack, because they'll influence what all the other kids do" (Rushkoff 2001). Look-Look is somewhat secretive about its client list, which includes Universal Pictures, Disney Films, and Skyy Vodka. Other market research firms report that companies such as Xerox, Colgate-Palmolive, Kraft Foods, Duracell, Playtex, Honda, Pioneer Stereo, and Anheuser-Busch have all utilized qualitative market research to direct their production, distribution, and marketing strategies. Sociology students who become proficient in ethnographic methods may well be the hottest new hires in the field of commercial ethnography.



Cool Hunter Loic Bizel, a French "cool hunter" in Japan, picks up a pair of hand-painted sneakers in Tokyo's Harajuku shopping district. His job is to observe and report on the fast-changing street fads of Japan.

separate truth from feeling or opinion. This ideal may be desirable and reasonable, but can "facts" really speak for themselves? And if so, can we discover those facts without somehow involving ourselves in them?

Some "facts" that sociologists once took to be objective reality have since been invalidated. Racist, sexist, and ethnocentric perspectives long dominated the field and passed for "truth." For many years scientific reality consisted only of the experience of white European males, and the realities of women, ethnic minorities, and others outside the mainstream were categorically ignored or dismissed. For example, until recently, heart problems in women were likely to go undiagnosed, which meant that women were more likely than men to die from heart attacks. Why? Because medical research on heart attacks used mostly male subjects and so had not discovered that women's symptoms are different from men's (Rabin 2008). It is easy now, through hindsight, to see that our "knowledge" was severely distorted. We must, therefore, be willing to recognize that what presently passes for fact may some day be challenged.

Another obstacle to achieving objectivity is our subjective nature as human beings. Our own experience of the world, and therefore sense of reality, is inevitably personal and idiosyncratic. Although we recognize our innate subjectivity, we still long for and actively pursue what we call absolute truth. But some social scientists question this ideal; they propose that subjectivity is not only unavoidable, it may be preferable when it comes to the study of human beings. This is especially true of sociologists who do "autoethnographic" research, in which they themselves—and their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences—are the focus of their research (Ellis 1997). On the other hand, some postmodern thinkers have gone so far as to reject the notion that there is any objective reality out there in the first place. Their arguments parallel certain trends in the physical sciences as well, where developments such as chaos theory and fuzzy logic suggest the need to reconsider the assumption of an orderly universe.

reactivity the tendency of people and events to react to the process of being studied

Hawthorne effect a specific example of reactivity, in which the desired effect is the result not of the independent variable but of the research itself

deception the extent to which the participants in a research project are unaware of the project or its goals

REACTIVITY In addition to maintaining their objectivity, social scientists must also be concerned with **reactivity**, the ways that people and events respond to being studied. One classic example of reactivity comes from studies that were conducted from 1927 to 1932 at the Hawthorne plant of Western Electric in Chicago. Elton Mayo, a Harvard business school professor, sought to examine the effect of varying work conditions on motivation and productivity in the factory. When he changed certain conditions—such as lighting levels, rest breaks, and even rates of pay—he found that each change resulted in a rise in productivity both in the individual worker and in the group. What was more surprising, however, was that returning to the original conditions also resulted in a rise in productivity. Mayo concluded, then, that the variables he had manipulated were not the causes of productivity; rather, *it was the effect of being studied*, or what is now referred to as the **Hawthorne effect**. In other words the workers had responded to the researchers' taking interest in their performance, and it was this attention that had caused the improvement.

Researchers must always be aware that their subjects, whether in an experiment or in a natural observation, are active and intelligent participants. The subjects may be able to sense what the researchers are trying to understand or prove and in effect "give them what they want" by responding to even the unspoken goals of the research. Our presence as researchers always has some effect on those we study, whether noticeable to us or not.

Research Ethics

Doing research that involves other human beings means that we must address moral issues (questions about right and wrong conduct) as we make decisions that will affect them. For this reason various academic disciplines have developed ethical guidelines—professional standards for honest and honorable dealings with others—meant to help direct the decision making of such researchers. When we use other people as means to an end, we must protect them as ends in themselves.

It's easy to understand the risks of participating in, say, a pharmaceutical drug trial or a study of the effects of radiation treatment on certain types of cancers. The risks of participating in social research are different and more subtle. It is often the case, for example, that social researchers don't fully explain the details of their research project to the participating subjects. Sometimes this is necessary: survey respondents, for example, must be able to answer questions without interference from the researcher and the potential for bias. Also, ethnographic fieldworkers operate on various levels of secrecy or **deception**: even when an ethnographer has openly declared herself a researcher, it is often impossible for her to remind every person she speaks with that she is a scientific observer as well as a participant. And if she deliberately presents an inauthentic self to the group, then that makes all her interactions inauthentic as well. This can affect the fieldworker's ability to discover the members' real,



Changing the World

Brown vs. the Board of Education

Earl Babbie (2002) claims that research biases have come into play in the area of U.S. racial relations and documents several cases in the country's history to illustrate the point.

In 1896 the Supreme Court established the doctrine of "separate but equal" as a means of "guaranteeing equal protection" for African Americans while still allowing racial segregation. Although no social research was directly cited in the Court's ruling, it is widely believed that the justices were influenced by the writing of William Graham Sumner (1906), a leading social scientist of his time. Sumner believed that the customs of a society were relatively impervious to outside influence and that therefore the legal system should not be used to enforce social change. The saying "You can't legislate morality" is a reflection of such thinking. So instead of allowing blacks the same rights and access to resources, the Court continued to uphold segregation.

The doctrine of "separate but equal" persisted until it was finally overturned in 1954 in the landmark civil rights case *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, which outlawed racial segregation in schools. This time the Supreme Court justices based their unanimous decision on several other, more contemporary sociological and psychological studies (Blaunstein and Zangrando 1970). Apparently the Court was now of the belief that morality *could* be legislated. It is no surprise, then, that controversy erupted again when in 1966 a noted sociologist, James Coleman, published his findings about a national study on race and education. Coleman claimed that the academic performance of African American students attending integrated schools was no better than that of those attending segregated schools; that such things as libraries, laboratories, or expenditures per student had less influence on academic performance than neighborhoods or family. While some criticized Coleman on methodological grounds, others were more concerned that his findings might be used to support a return to segregation. This has not happened, but neither has complete integration. Much more work needs to be done toward creating an educational system that serves all students, and social research will continue to be part of that process. Most social scientists, and the American public in general, support civil rights and racial equality. These beliefs inspire research at the same time that research inspires continued social change. Even though we aim for value-free sociology, there are some topics on which it is hard to remain neutral.



grounded meanings. What, then, has she really been able to learn about the setting and its members?

Codes of ethics in the social sciences do not provide strict rules for researchers to abide by in these cases; rather they set out principles to guide the researcher's decision making. Secrecy and deceit are thus never strictly prohibited; instead researchers are cautioned to acquire the informed consent of their subjects and to conduct themselves in a way that protects the subjects from harm.

What other kinds of harm can come to participants? They're not likely to get diseases, and there is usually little risk in sitting down to complete a survey questionnaire! But harm *can* result, mostly as a result of the breaching of confidentiality. Research subjects are entitled to "rights of

Global Perspective

The Nuremberg Code and Research Ethics

The origins of contemporary research ethics can be traced back to the Nuremberg Military Tribunals of the late 1940s, in which a group of Nazi doctors were tried for the horrific "experiments" they had performed during World War II. These experiments involved the torture and death of thousands of concentration camp inmates. Of the 23 Nazi doctors tried at Nuremberg, 16 were convicted of war crimes. Besides a kind of justice for the deaths of so many, the other enduring result of the trials was the Nuremberg Code, a set of moral and ethical guidelines for performing research on human beings. According to these guidelines, developed by two doctors, Andrew Ivy and Leo Alexander, scientists must accept certain responsibilities: to perform only research that can "yield fruitful results for the good of society, unprocurable by other methods"; to protect their human subjects from "all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and injury"; and to perform research only on subjects who give their informed, noncoerced consent.

In America, there was strong support for the Nuremberg Code. But at the same time that it was being developed, the U.S. government was involved in its own medical atrocity, though it would not be revealed to the public until decades later: the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. In 1932, the U.S. Public Health Service began a 40-year-long study of "untreated syphilis in the male negro": 399 African American men from Tuskegee, an impoverished region of Alabama, who were infected with syphilis were left untreated so that doctors could observe the natural progression of the disease. The symptoms include painful sores, hair loss, sterility, blindness, paralysis, and insanity and finally lead to death; the disease can be transmitted by men to their sexual partners, and infected women can pass it on to their infants. By 1947, penicillin was widely accepted as the preferred treatment for syphilis, but government doctors decided to leave the Tuskegee men untreated to avoid interfering with the study's results.

While these doctors had not intentionally inflicted the disease upon subjects, neither had they offered a cure when it became available. The full story of the Tuskegee experiment was not revealed until 1972, and it was not until 1997 that President Bill Clinton issued an official apology from the U.S. government to the victims and their families. Clearly, Americans were as guilty of violating moral and ethical codes as Germany had been at a similar time in history.

What is important to take away from this lesson is the need for all scientific research to adhere to ethical standards—this includes the social as well as medical sciences. In either case, researchers must consider the potential harm that they can cause to human subjects. You may not think of sociologists as dealing with life-and-death issues, yet as researchers we often find ourselves in positions where certain kinds of studies can't be undertaken because of concerns for the well-being of the potential subjects.



The Nuremberg Code In the wake of the Nuremberg Military Tribunals after World War II (pictured above), science organizations adopted a set of guidelines to regulate researchers' ethical conduct. Whether studying biology, psychiatry, or sociology, researchers must consider the potential harm they could cause to research participants.

biographical anonymity": researchers are required to protect their privacy. This protection is essential to gathering valid data, especially when dealing with controversial topics or vulnerable populations. Respondents must be guaranteed that no one will be able to identify them from reading the research findings. But while most researchers take steps to disguise the identities of individuals and locations, it is sometimes difficult to keep others from uncovering them. For example a classic sociological pseudonym, "Middletown" (Lynd and Lynd 1929, 1937), was long ago revealed to be Muncie, Indiana—and since the Middletown studies were seen as an example of the shallowness and triviality of American culture, this was not such a good thing for Muncie's reputation!

Sometimes worse than having others recognize a place or person is having subjects themselves find out what was written about them. Carolyn Ellis (1995) had an unsettling experience when she returned to the small mid-Atlantic fishing village in which she had spent years living and doing fieldwork. In the time she had been gone, she had published a book about the village, and excerpts had made their way back to the villagers, who were upset at the way that Ellis had depicted them. These villagers, who had considered Ellis to be their friend, felt deeply betrayed; they felt that she had abused their hospitality and misrepresented them as uncouth, uneducated hicks. Despite her protests that she was simply doing her job as a sociologist, many villagers refused to speak with her again, and she was shut out of a social world that she had once been an integral part of.

Researchers may undertake other kinds of risks as well. Particularly in ethnographic research, and especially if researching a dangerous subculture, researchers may be at risk of life and limb. Sociologist Martin Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) became a member of a street gang in order to conduct his research. Ethnographer John Van Maanen (1973, 1983, 1988) found himself at risk of a prison term and in what he called a "moral fix" when he witnessed a controversial beating during the course of his fieldwork at an urban police department. A subpoena was issued requiring him to testify in the case. If he did, it would incriminate the police officers whose trust he had gained over months of fieldwork; if he didn't, it would doom the beating victim, a drifter whose only crime was being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Van Maanen felt a strong moral obligation to protect the confidentiality of his subjects and was ultimately successful in keeping his fieldnotes out of court (Adler and Adler 2000).

In order to encourage the protection of research subjects, each academic discipline has adopted its own **code of ethics** to provide guidelines for researchers. The American Sociological Association Code of Ethics, for example, sets out recommendations for how to avoid bias, adhere to professional standards, and protect respondents from harm. In addition, universities where research is conducted have a body known as an **institutional review board**, or IRB, a group of scholars who meet regularly to review the research proposals of their colleagues. If an IRB has reservations about the safety of the subjects in a given research project, it may act to stop that project from going forward. In extreme cases funding may be revoked if the subjects are being put at undue risk; entire university power structures have been undermined as a result of pervasive research ethics problems.

code of ethics ethical guidelines for researchers to consult as they design a project

institutional review board a group of scholars within a university who meet regularly to review and approve the research proposals of their colleagues and make recommendations for how to protect human subjects

The power invested in IRBs is seen as controversial by some. The boards are often made up entirely of scholars in medicine, biology, chemistry, and physics; social scientists have questioned their ability to make judgments about social research. Because IRBs have the power to shut down research projects, perhaps they should be discipline specific, with biologists judging biologists, psychologists judging psychologists, and sociologists judging sociologists.

Closing Comments

In this chapter, you have learned the different methods used by sociologists to investigate the social world. Each method has its strengths and limitations, and each can be fruitfully applied to a variety of research questions. In fact this is exactly what you will be doing in future chapters.

Each chapter from this point on will feature two Data Workshops in which you will be asked to apply one of the methods from this chapter to an actual sociological research project. You will get a chance to practice doing the work of sociological research, analyzing (and sometimes gathering) your own data. You may find yourself referring back to this chapter to remind yourself of the specifics of each methodology. This is exactly what you should be doing—it's okay if two months from now you don't remember the details. Just because you're moving on to Chapter 4, don't forget that Chapter 3 can continue to be useful to you throughout the term. And maybe even beyond that.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **An Overview of Research Methods** Quantitative research produces data that can be converted to numbers. This often means survey research, which tends to answer questions about cause-and-effect relationships. Qualitative research produces data that cannot be meaningfully converted to numbers and is more likely to address questions of meaning.
- **Taking a Scientific Approach** Whether qualitative or quantitative, most sociological research uses the scientific method, which calls for researchers to begin with a hypothesis stating a potential relationship between two or more variables. These variables are carefully defined so they can be measured; data are then collected that allow the hypothesis to be tested.
- **Ethnographic Methods** Ethnography is often a two-part activity: active participation in and observation of a naturally occurring setting, and a written account (fieldnotes) of what goes on there. Research may be overt (open) or covert. Ethnographic studies can't be truly replicated, don't always study groups that are representative of a larger population, and are particularly vulnerable to researcher bias.
- **Interviews** Interviews involve direct, face-to-face contact with respondents and often generate large quantities of qualitative data. The researcher identifies the population about whom she wishes to generalize and carefully selects a sample of people to be interviewed from that population. Like surveys, interviewers must be careful to construct questions that will produce meaningful answers and to avoid leading or double-barreled questions as well as the use of ambiguous or emotional language.
- **Surveys** Survey research is usually quantitative and generates more respondents than any type of qualitative research. In order to generalize about a population, surveys require a representative sample, often a simple random sample in which every member of a population has an equal chance of selection. The lack of a qualitative component lowers the validity of survey work, a risk that is increased by low response rate or self-selected respondents.
- **Existing Sources** Comparative-historical research and content analysis rely on existing sources of data from both the past and the present. This allows access to distant times and places and much larger data sets than any one researcher could gather alone. Digital media provide a wealth of material as data and make it particularly easy for future researchers to replicate analysis.
- **Experiments** Sociological experiments offer great advantages to those trying to construct models or build theories, as they allow control over every aspect of a situation and provide a high degree of replicability. However, by screening out the complexities and messiness of the real world, experiments also lose some of their ability to simulate real social life.
- **Issues in Sociological Research** In the past it was considered desirable to remain objective and value free, but this position is now hotly debated. Issues of reactivity and reflectivity come into play with both positions. All sociologists agree that ethical research is important, and to this end most research now passes before an institutional review board, which exists to protect the rights of research subjects.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Judith Stacey carried out her ethnography of working-class families by means of participant observation, often acting as a full participant within the setting. How do you think this affected what she learned? How would her conclusions have been different if she had simply done interviews?
2. Under what circumstances do you think that covert research is justified? How did Richard Mitchell, who studied militant survivalists, justify hiding his intentions from his subjects? How would you feel if you found out someone was secretly studying you?
3. According to Clifford Geertz, ethnographers should try to write "thick description." Imagine you are in the field, and you see one of your subjects quickly close his right eyelid. What sort of details would you have to record for your readers to know if this action was a wink or a twitch?

4. Does reflexivity sound like a good or bad thing to you? How did it play out for Judith Stacey in her ethnographic work? Can you imagine a field setting where you would be at a disadvantage by the way your presence affected the group? How about a field setting where you would have an advantage?
5. Try to write a survey or interview question that asks about a respondent's political affiliation without being biased or using language that might spark an emotional response.
6. "Did you understand everything in this chapter, and what was your favorite part?" If this was an interview question, what would be wrong with it?
7. Imagine that your teacher asks you to do a simple random sample of your class. How would you select your sample so that you could be sure each member had an equal chance of being included?
8. Researchers are now using social networking websites like Facebook and MySpace to gather a wide variety of data. If researchers read your profile (or those of your friends or family), do you think they would have a valid understanding of who you (or they) are? Is there a weakness of research that relies on existing sources?
9. Do you think you would react differently to an ethnographer from a market research firm than you would to one from a university?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Becker, Howard. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Describes a multitude of tricks to make research more successful; includes discussions of qualitative and quantitative research, reactivity, and sampling.

Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus, eds. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Deals with the problem of treating ethnography as if it were an objective science.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. An excellent and hands-on introduction to the oft-neglected art of taking fieldnotes.

Erickson, Kai T. *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Wiley. This study of deviance in seventeenth-century Massachusetts relies on existing data (mainly court records) to present a surprising picture of crime, alcoholism, and premarital sex.

Huff, Darrell. 1993. *How to Lie with Statistics*. New York: W. W. Norton. Although not specifically about the statistical analysis of survey data, the insights expressed will still help any reader become a more skeptical consumer of survey research.

Myerhoff, Barbara. 1976. *Number Our Days*. New York: Touchstone Press. An excellent and moving example of what ethnography can be, providing insight into the process of gaining access.

Number Our Days. 1978. Dir. Lynne Littman. Direct Cinema Limited. This wonderful short film, a record of Barbara Myerhoff's ethnographic work with an elderly Jewish population in Venice Beach, California, won an Oscar for best documentary short.

SurveyMonkey. This website enables anyone to create online surveys quickly and easily. Learn more about writing and administering questionnaires. Of course, such surveys are not necessarily scientific. Available at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/

The *Up* series: *Seven Up* (1964), *7 Plus Seven* (1970), *21 Up* (1977), *28 Up* (1984), *35 Up* (1991), *42 Up* (1998), and *49 Up* (2005). Dir. Michael Apted and Paul Almond. First Run Features. Director Apted began in 1963 by interviewing 14 English seven-year-olds from diverse class backgrounds, and he returned to interview them again every seven years.



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PART II

Framing Social Life



How does culture shape our social worlds? How are our personal identities produced by our cultural contexts and social interactions? How does participation in group life shape both individual experience and social structure? How are what is normal and what is deviant defined, and what are the consequences for people who are labeled accordingly? Part II of this text addresses these questions in four chapters on culture (Chapter 4), the self and interaction (Chapter 5), groups (Chapter 6), and deviance (Chapter 7). The ability to examine, describe, analyze, and explain the points of intersection between the individual world and the social world is sociology's special contribution to the larger scholarly endeavor. Over the next four chapters you will encounter many works by sociologists that illustrate the links between the individual and society. Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp's book *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret* (2003) is perfect for highlighting these themes.

Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret is an ethnographic portrait of a Key West drag club, where gay male performers don sexy dresses, lavish wigs, and theatrical makeup and sing and dance for a diverse audience: tourists and locals, men and women, gays and straights. Rupp and Taylor get to know the "801 Girls," their friends, family, and audience members, and the authors even try out their own sort of drag. (That's right—women dressed as men dressed as women!)

Rupp and Taylor recognize that the particular culture of the 801 Cabaret is nestled within multiple contemporary American subcultures. For example, Key West is an island subculture that offers a year-round, touristy, carnivalesque atmosphere as part of its charm. It "remains a flamboyant mix of cultures. . . . [I]t shelters not only vibrant Cuban and Bahamian enclaves, but also artistic, hippie, and gay communities. . . . The city, [says journalist Charles Kuralt,] is 'full of dreamers, drifters, and dropouts, spongers and idlers and barflies, writers and fishermen, islanders from the Caribbean and gays from the big cities, painters and pensioners, treasure hunters, real estate speculators, smugglers, runaways, old Conchs and young lovers . . . all elaborately tolerant of one another'" (pp. 50–51). For the 801 girls, this means that the subcultures associated with both gay masculinity and drag performance are supported and sustained on the island in ways they might not be on the mainland. Because of the island's unique mix of subcultures, one of the performers asserts that "Key West is the true home of accepted diversity" (p. 55).

In Key West's culture, many kinds of people feel free to be themselves. But what does that really mean? For the drag queens at the 801 Cabaret, their performances are about putting on a different identity than the one they present in their everyday lives. These are men with flashy female alter-egos—Kevin becomes "Kylie"; Roger becomes "Inga"; Dean becomes "Milla." And their process of becoming is elaborate and grueling:

> Some of the girls shave all over their bodies, some their faces, chests, legs, and arms, some just their faces. . . . They powder their faces, necks, and chests, using a thick base to hide their beards. . . . Eyeliner, eye shadow, mascara, false eyelashes, lip liner, and lipstick are painstakingly applied. (pp. 12–13)

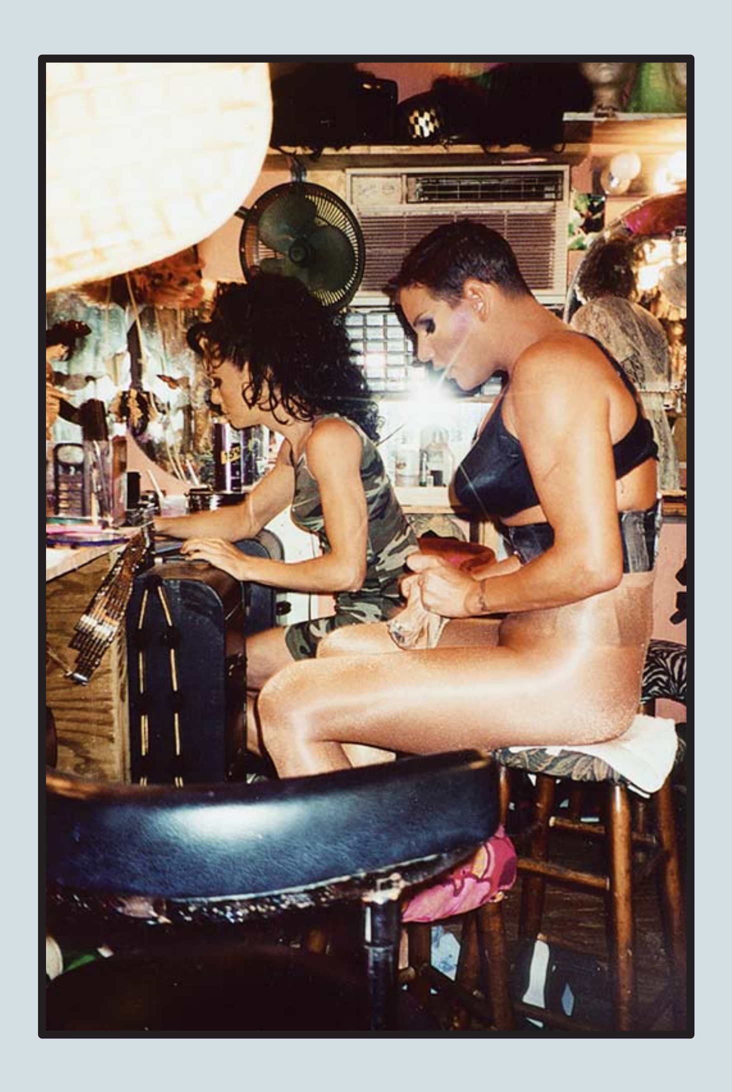
So far, this doesn't sound all that different than the ablutions many women perform every morning in front of the mirror. After the makeup, however, things get a little more intricate, as the "girls"

> tuck their penises and testicles between their legs, using a gaff [a special panty], or several, to make sure everything stays out of sight . . . panty hose, sometimes several layers . . . corsets and waist cinchers . . . they all, of course, wear bras . . . [filled with] water balloons (the tied end makes an amazingly realistic nipple), half a Nerf football, lentil beans in a pair of nylons, foam or silicone prostheses. (pp. 20–21)

All this work to look like women—and that's not taking into account the exhausting work of acting the part, onstage and off. While drag queens do not seek to convince their audiences that they are "real" women, they do move, speak, sing, and dance in stereotypically feminine style as part of their performances. And that's the insight that drag queens



Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp



Drag queens and drag shows allow others to cross between groups, to see what life might be like in a world in which gender boundaries are fluid and homosexuality is normal:

> As one of the few ways that straight people encounter gay culture—where, in fact, straight people live for an hour or two in an environment where gay is normal and straight is other—drag shows . . . play an important role for the gay/lesbian movement. Precisely because drag shows are entertaining, they attract people who might never otherwise be exposed to gay politics. As one female audience member put it, they "take something difficult and make it light." (pp. 207–208)

Finally, drag shows also challenge our notions about what is normal and what is deviant, when performers embrace what would otherwise be considered a stigmatized identity and turn it into something to be proud of. Drag queens can be seen as voluntary outsiders, unconcerned about fitting into mainstream society. Rupp and Taylor make the argument that drag is a form of social protest—against a society in which gender and sexual orientation are crammed into limiting, two-category systems; against a society in which identities are seen as immutable; and against a society in which certain forms of cultural expression are marginalized. Their analysis of the social world of one Key West drag club offers sociological insights into the lives of the individual performers who work against social stigma and limitations to provide new ways of looking at culture, self, and society.

provide about our own identities: it's *all* performance! Our male and female selves are the products of interactional accomplishments (see pp. 130–133), and "real" women do many of the same things that drag queens do in order to express femininity.

Because the drag queens perform different identities onstage and off, the 801 Cabaret calls into question some of our most important and taken-for-granted boundaries between social groups: males and females, and gays and straights. In fact, drag queens are living examples of the intersections between these groups. One of the performers says:

> Last night—though this happens almost every night—[this woman] goes, "I'm straight, I'm a woman, I'm not a lesbian, but you're so beautiful, I find you so attractive" . . . [and] a straight guy, has been straight for like fifty years or something like that . . . goes, "You know, I've been straight all my life, and I know you're a man, but you're so beautiful . . . I can't keep my eyes off you." (p. 201)





CHAPTER 4 Cultural Crossroads

In 2000 and 2001 Lieutenant Colonel Martha McSally, the highest-ranking female fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force, was stationed in Saudi Arabia and was one of the only women to pilot her fighter jet on combat and patrol missions in the "no-fly zone" over Iraq. When on the job, she wore her uniform with pride—it identified her as a pilot, an officer, and a patriot. But whenever she left the Air Force base in Saudi Arabia for any reason, even to conduct official business, she was not allowed to wear her uniform.

At that time the U.S. military required female soldiers in Islamic countries to wear traditional garb when they went off base. In Saudi Arabia, women in the military had to wear head scarves and *abayas* (floor-length black robes). They also had to obey other Saudi laws: they could not drive cars (and had to sit in the back seat, behind the male driver) or go out in public without a male chaperone. The military's rationale was that it was respecting local values (including *sharia*, or Islamic laws) and protecting American servicewomen.

Lt. Col. McSally refused to obey these rules. She wanted to wear her own clothes and would not put on the *abaya* when she left her base. Her insubordination drew threats of court-martial proceedings; in return, in January 2002, McSally filed a lawsuit against the Department of Defense (DOD), arguing that as a non-Muslim, she should not be bound by *sharia*—indeed, she stated that obeying *sharia* made her "deny her own faith" as a Christian. She also claimed that the dress code violated her individual rights as an American and that it undermined military unit cohesion and command structure. In other words, it was confusing for men to take orders from her on base but to chauffeur her in nonmilitary attire off base. As McSally testified, "It's demeaning and humiliating, and affects my authority as a military officer." Many of her colleagues, both male and female, agreed.

As a result of McSally's lawsuit—and her additional appeals to Congress—the military has changed some of its rules. In May 2002, the House of Representatives passed a bill preventing the DOD from requiring or even "strongly advising" traditional Muslim dress for American servicewomen. They are still, however, prevented from driving alone off base. While the new legislation satisfied some of the claims in McSally's suit, she is still considering how to further the cause of women's rights

SocIndex

Then and Now

1915: Gillette markets its first razor made especially for women: Milady Décolletée.

2006: Approximately 80% of professional women in the United States shave their legs and underarms.

Here and There

Connecticut: With 115 samples, memorabilia dealer John Reznikoff owns the largest collection of hair samples, taken from such historical figures as Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, and Marilyn Monroe.

Andhra Pradesh, India: Each year, at the temple of Tirupati, 6.5 million religious pilgrims shave their heads and donate their hair, which is auctioned and generates approximately $2.2 million a year for the temple.

This and That

Approximately 35 million American men and 25 million American women with thinning hair spend more than $1.5 billion a year on hair restoration products, drugs, and surgery.

The number of laser hair removal treatments reached 1.4 million in 2006, making it the second-fastest-growing noninvasive surgical procedure in the United States.

in the military and to secure cultural and religious freedoms for servicepeople. The publicity surrounding her case generated significant interest outside the legal and military communities. Accordingly, a book and movie about McSally's story are currently in development.

McSally has since gone on to become a colonel and the first woman to lead an Air Force fighter squadron into combat, and Saudi Arabia has promised to lift its ban on women drivers by 2009. But this case also brings up many questions related to the study of culture. Why are there such seemingly vast differences between American and Saudi Arabian cultures? Why does each culture have such different ideas about the way women should interact with men and how they should dress? Why was the Air Force so adamant about military personnel respecting the culture of their host country? Why were American values such as individualism and gender equality so important to McSally? How do different cultures influence or conflict with one another? Can institutions such as the military or even religious traditions such as Christianity and Islam allow for change? This chapter will provoke you to ponder such cultural issues.



Then-Lt. Col. Martha McSally in 2002 McSally asked a judge to decide whether military rules governed the attire of American servicewomen traveling off the base in Saudi Arabia. Before her lawsuit, servicewomen were required to wear the *abaya* (right).

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

Culture is one of the fundamental elements of social life and thus a very important topic in sociology. Many of the concepts presented here will come up again in almost every subsequent chapter. You will need to keep these concepts in mind as you learn about other substantive areas. You will also want to think about how culture is relevant to the things you already know from your own life experience. Try to come up with some of your own examples as you read along. The subject of culture is probably inherently interesting to most people. But although culture is familiar to all of us, you should be seeing it in a new and different way by the time you finish this chapter.

culture the entire way of life of a group of people (including both material and symbolic elements) that acts as a lens through which one views the world and is passed from one generation to the next

What Is Culture?

Culture encompasses practically all of human civilization and touches on almost every aspect of social life. It is so much a part of the world around us that we may not recognize the extent to which it shapes and defines who we are. In the broadest sense, we can say that **culture** is the entire way of life of a group of people. It can include everything from language and gestures to style of dress and standards of beauty, from customs and rituals to tools and artifacts, from music and child-rearing practices to the proper way for customers to line up in a grocery store. It forms basic beliefs and assumptions about the world and the way things work and defines the moral parameters of what is right and wrong, good and bad.

Although culture varies from group to group, all societies develop some form of culture. It is the human equivalent of instinct in animals: although we humans do have some basic

instincts, culture actually accounts for our great success as a species. We are totally dependent on it to deal with the demands of life in society. As culture develops, it is shared among members of a group, handed down from generation to generation, and passed along from one group or individual to another.

Although culture may seem to us to be "second nature," it is actually something that is learned, rather than innate. Because we learn it so slowly and incrementally, we are often unaware of the process. For instance, few of us would be conscious of having *learned* all the slang words we currently use or the distance we typically maintain from someone while talking with him. We may not remember exactly when we first felt patriotic or how we formed our opinions about people from the upper class. We all carry culture inside ourselves; it becomes ingrained and internalized into our way of thinking and acting. Culture guides the way we make sense of the world around us and the way we make decisions about what to do and how to do it. We can talk about the culture of a given country, state, or community, of people belonging to an ethnic or religious group, or of those working in the same profession. We can even say that sports enthusiasts, schoolmates, or a clique of friends share in a common culture. We'll discuss some of these cultural variations later in the chapter.

How Has Culture Been Studied?

People study culture in a variety of ways. Theologians and philosophers, for example, might debate the morals and values of an ideal culture. Anthropologists often investigate smaller societies outside the United States. They travel around the world and engage in empirical fieldwork, collecting stories and artifacts that document the realities of the cultures they study (Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson are two of the most well known). In many cases, though, these cultures are often seen as "other"—interesting because of their distinctive differences from the anthropologist's home culture, which often goes unexamined.

In contrast, sociologists mainly focus on culture closer to home, usually the same societies to which they belong. They do this by using the different theories discussed in Chapter 2—functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, and postmodernism—as well as the research methods discussed in Chapter 3. At the same time, however, sociologists may also engage in the process of "othering" by studying the unusual, extraordinary, or deviant in cultural groups. In so doing, they may fail to consider some aspects of the culture that is right in front of them. This is where the sociology of everyday life offers certain benefits. By studying the mundane as well as the exceptional, we can learn about culture in all its interesting permutations. We can learn not only about the differences between cultural groups—"us" and "them"—but also the similarities.

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

Culture acts as a lens through which we view the world. That lens, however, can either elucidate or obscure what we are looking at. Often we can't clearly see our own culture, precisely because we are so familiar with it. Yet when exposed to another culture, through travel, television, or other means, we can readily see what is different or exotic. Rarely does our perspective allow us to recognize the strangeness in our own culture.

One of the best examples of the challenges in observing culture is presented in a famous article by Horace Miner called "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" (1956). The article focuses on the beliefs and practices of this North American people concerning the care of their bodies. Miner observes that their fundamental belief appears to be that the human body is ugly and is susceptible to decay and disease, and the only way to counter these conditions is to engage in elaborate ceremonies and rituals. All members of the Nacirema culture conform to a greater or lesser degree to these practices and then pass them along to their children. One passage describes the household shrine where many of the body rituals take place:

> While each family has at least one shrine, the rituals associated with it are not family ceremonies but are private and secret. . . . The focal point of the shrine is a box or chest which is built into a wall. In this chest are kept the many charms and magical potions without which no native believes he could live. . . . Beneath the charm-box is a small font. Each day every member of the family, in succession, enters the shrine room, bows his head before the charm-box, mingles different sorts of holy water in the font, and proceeds with a brief rite of ablution.

The Nacirema regularly visit medicine men, "holy-mouth men," and other specialized practitioners from whom they procure magical potions.

> The Nacirema have an almost pathological horror of and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have a supernatural influence on all social relationships. Were it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaws shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them. The daily body ritual performed by everyone

includes a mouth-rite. It was reported to me that the ritual consists of inserting a small bundle of hog hairs into the mouth, along with certain magical powders, and then moving the bundle in a highly formalized series of gestures.

Do the Nacirema seem like a strange group of people, or are they somehow familiar? Miner writes as though he were an anthropologist studying some exotic tribe of primitive people. In actuality, the passages above describe the bathroom and personal health-care habits of the average American. (Note that "Nacirema" is "American" spelled backward.) He doesn't embellish or make up anything; he merely approaches the topic as if he knew nothing about its meaning. So the "charm-box" is the standard medicine cabinet, the "holy water" font is a sink, the medicine men and "holy-mouth men" are doctors and dentists, and the exotic "mouth-rite" is the practice of brushing teeth.

One of the reasons that Miner's article has become so popular is that it demonstrates how easy it is to fail to see our own culture, precisely because we take it for granted. The article reminds students who are becoming social analysts how useful culture shock is in helping to see even what is most familiar to us as bizarre or strange. Throughout this chapter, keep in mind that your powers of observation must be applied to looking at both "them" and "us."

Another, related problem arises when trying to understand cultures other than our own. Generally, we think of our own culture as being the "normal" one, a belief known as **ethnocentrism**. We don't realize that culture is something learned and that there is nothing inherently better about ours. Ethnocentrism means that we use our own culture as a kind of measuring stick with which to judge other individuals or societies; anyone outside our group seems "off-center" or abnormal.

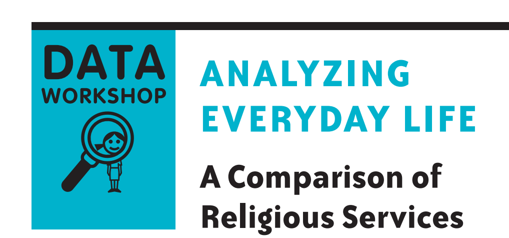
As sociologists, we want to have as clear a view of any society as possible; this requires that we suspend, at least temporarily, our ethnocentrism. There are several ways to do this. In Chapter 1, we learned about the sociological imagination, culture shock, and beginner's mind—all ways to see the world anew. We can add to that list **cultural relativism**, which means seeing each different culture as simply that—different. Not better or worse, not right or wrong, but on its own terms. This helps us place different values, beliefs, norms, and practices within their own cultural context. By practicing cultural relativism, or being culturally sensitive, we begin to see others more clearly, and without judgment, and therefore to appreciate their way of life. We can discover viewpoints and interpretations of reality different from our own. Cultural relativism becomes all the more important in our increasingly diverse society. The Data Workshop below will help you see how.

ethnocentrism the principle of using one's own culture as a means or standard by which to evaluate another group or individual, leading to the view that cultures other than one's own are abnormal

cultural relativism the principle of understanding other cultures on their own terms, rather than judging or evaluating according to one's own culture



"Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" Horace Miner reminds us how easy it is to overlook aspects of our own culture, precisely because it seems so normal to us.



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

A Comparison of Religious Services

Some people argue that religions are cultures within themselves. This is easiest to see in the case of groups such as the FLDS (a fundamentalist Mormon sect whose members practice polygamy and tend to live in isolated rural compounds) and the white-supremacist World Church of the Creator (whose leader, Matt Hale, is currently in prison for conspiring to kill a federal judge), but even your friendly neighborhood congregation has a specific set of beliefs that are particular to itself. This Data Workshop will help you uncover some characteristics of two specific religious cultures and compare them in nonjudgmental ways. This is an ethnographic exercise and is meant to help you identify ethnocentrism and practice cultural relativism. (Refer back to Chapter 3 if you need a refresher on ethnographic methods.)

Step 1: Observing Services

Select two different houses of worship—church, synagogue, temple, mosque, or other place of worship—and attend one service at each. You may want to compare two different



Comparing Religious Cultures Every religion has a culture—its own set of norms, values, beliefs, and practices that differ from those of other congregations, even within the same denomination. As an ethnographic exercise, visit two houses of worship and compare your experiences.

denominations within the same broad religious category (a Catholic mass and a Protestant service, for example, both Christian denominations) or two different religions (a Catholic mass and an Islamic prayer service). Any choice is fine (including one you are familiar with, if any) as long as it is open to the public. You may want to call their offices first, to find out if there are certain dress code requirements or other things you need to know about before you arrive. Remember, when you visit your chosen houses of worship, you must behave in a respectful manner. If you suspect that you can't maintain a quiet (if that's called for) and respectful demeanor, then choose a different service to attend.

Observe closely all that you encounter. Since it is probably not appropriate for you to jot down notes during a religious service, you should write your fieldnotes as soon as you can afterward. Record in as much detail as possible what was said, done, or sung during your period of observation.

- When do people act in unison?
- When do they act individually?
- What types of different roles do people take on in the ceremony—leaders, helpers, participants?
- Are they all deeply involved at all times?
- Who is staring at the ceiling or whispering to their neighbor?
- How do others respond to such behavior?

Observe the architecture, any decorations, the clothing worn by different participants, and the objects—books, scrolls, musical instruments, statues, paintings, vessels, collection plates—that are part of the service. Pay as much attention as possible to the interactions that are a central part of the ritual, as well as those that occur on the margins (either just before or just after the ceremony).

Step 2: Identifying Similarities and Differences
Read through your fieldnotes and reflect on each experience. Then answer the following questions.

- What similarities and differences did you notice in the material aspects of the two ceremonies—that is, in the arrangement of the space, the use of furniture, statues, or other objects that were part of the service?
- What about the "text" and "script"; the types of words that were uttered (and by whom, and when); their sources (sacred books, hymnals, photocopied programs); the music that was played or sung; the periods of prayer or meditation; the ways in which participants were invited to speak (or to remain silent) or otherwise take part? In addition to noting their differences, consider whether there were any similarities in either form or content.
- What similarities and differences did you notice in the behavior of the participants? Were both children and adults present? Did both men and women participate in the same ways? Did participants engage in similar actions and interactions?
- Can you identify any differences in actual beliefs as a result of your observations? What about similarities?

material culture the objects associated with a cultural group, such as tools, machines, utensils, buildings, and artwork: any physical object which we give social meaning

Beliefs may be similar in form, if not exactly in content—for example, most religions feature beliefs about what happens after we die, but while some believe our souls dwell permanently in either heaven or hell, others believe our souls are reincarnated in new bodies in an unending cycle.

- What did you observe in either service that seemed especially unfamiliar to you? What did you observe that seemed the most familiar, even if it was in an unfamiliar setting?

The key here is to focus on both the differences and the similarities. It often happens when we step into a new cultural milieu that we see only the differences and remain blind to the similarities. But identifying fundamental commonalities can make even the most bizarre practices seem less threatening. For example, according to Durkheim (1912/1995), all religions have a set of beliefs about the relationship between the sacred (holy, godlike, supernatural) and the profane (the ordinary, of this world). Can you identify these beliefs in the communities you observed? In addition, every religion has a set of practices that are designed to connect the holy and the worldly in some way. Think about the different rituals you observed: taking communion, for example, or simply praying or singing in a specially designated space. Aren't these rituals each designed to do just that, connect the sacred and profane?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Consider the bulleted questions above, and prepare some written notes that you can refer to during in-class discussions. Compare your notes and experiences with other students in small-group discussions. Take this opportunity to learn more about culture and different religious traditions.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay analyzing your field experiences and taking into consideration the bulleted questions above. Make sure to refer to your fieldnotes in the essay, and include them as an attachment to your paper.

Components of Culture

Since culture is such a broad concept, it is more easily grasped if we break it down into its constituent parts. Sociologists conceive of culture as consisting of two major categories: material culture and symbolic culture.

Material Culture

Material culture is any physical object to which we give social meaning: art and artifacts, tools and utensils, machines and weapons, clothing and furniture, buildings and toys—the list is immense. Any physical thing that people create, use, or appreciate might be considered material culture.

Examining material culture can tell us a great deal about a particular group or society. Just look around you, whether in your dorm room, a library, a coffee house, or a park—there should be many items that you can identify as belonging to material culture. Start with your own clothes and accessories and then extend your observations to your surroundings—the room, building, landscaping, street, neighborhood, community, and further outward. For instance, the designer label on a woman's purse might convey that she follows the current fashion trends, or the athletic logo on a man's T-shirt might tell us that he is into skateboarding. Likewise, the carpeting, light fixtures, furniture, and artwork in a building can tell us something about the people who live or work there. And the sports arenas, modes of transportation, historical monuments, and city dumps reveal the characteristics of a community. Perhaps the proliferation of drive-thru fast-food restaurants in practically every corner of the United States says something about American tastes and lifestyle: we spend more time on the road, cook fewer meals at home, and prefer the ease and predictability of knowing what we'll get each time we pull up to our favorite chain. If you were visiting another country, then you might see some very different items of material culture.

Studying the significance of material culture is like going on an archeological dig, but learning about the present rather than the distant past. Let's take as an example a sociological "dig" in Santa Barbara, California, where one of the authors of this book lives. Local leaders there have been active in preserving the image of the city, particularly in its downtown historical area. The original mission, presidio (military post), courthouse, and other landmarks built by early Spanish settlers are all still intact. Although the town has grown up around these buildings, zoning regulations require that new construction fit with the distinctive Mediterranean architecture of the "red tile roof" district. The size and design are restricted as well as the use of signs, lighting, paint, and landscaping. Thus, the newly built grocery store with its textured stucco walls, tile murals, and arched porticos may be difficult to distinguish from the century-old post office a few blocks away. By studying its material culture, we can see how Santa Barbara manages to preserve its history and heritage and successfully resist the pressures of encroaching urban development. The distinctive "old California" look and feel



How Is the Architecture of Santa Barbara an Example of Material Culture? Local leaders in Santa Barbara have preserved its history and resisted the pressures of encroaching urban development by insisting on maintaining the look of "old California."

of the city is perhaps its greatest charm, something that appeals to locals and a steady flock of tourists alike.

Symbolic Culture

Nonmaterial or **symbolic culture** reflects the ideas and beliefs of a group of people. It can be something as specific as a certain rule or custom, like driving on the right side of the road in the United States and on the left side in the United Kingdom. It can also be a broad social system such as democracy or a large-scale social pattern such as marriage. Because symbolic culture is so important to social life, let's look further at some of its main aspects.

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION: SIGNS, GESTURES, AND LANGUAGE One of the most important functions of symbolic culture is to allow us to communicate—through signs, gestures, and language. These form the basis of social interaction, a subject so central to sociology that the entire next chapter is devoted to it.

Signs (or symbols) such as a traffic signal, price tag, sheet of music, or product logo are something designed to meaningfully represent something else. They all convey information. Numbers and letters are the most common signs, but you are probably familiar with other graphic symbols indicating, for instance, which is the men's or women's bathroom, where the elevator is going, how to eject a DVD from the disk drive, or in what lane you should be driving.

While we can easily take for granted the meaning of most symbols, others we may have to learn—like emoticons, those cute (or devious) little expressions that we can now create on our computers. Some symbols may be nearly universal, while others may be particular to a given culture. It may take some interpretive work to understand what a sign means if you are unfamiliar with the context in which it is displayed.

Gestures are signs that we make with our body—clapping our hands, nodding our head, or smiling. Sometimes these acts are referred to as "body language" or "nonverbal communication," since they don't

symbolic culture the ideas associated with a cultural group, including ways of thinking (beliefs, values, and assumptions) and ways of behaving (norms, interactions, and communication)

sign a symbol that stands for or conveys an idea

gestures the ways in which people use their bodies to communicate without words; actions that have symbolic meaning

language a system of communication using vocal sounds, gestures, or written symbols; the basis of symbolic culture and the primary means through which we communicate with one another and perpetuate our culture

require any words. Gestures can be as subtle as a knowing glance or as obvious as a raised fist.

Most of the time, we can assume that other people will get what we are trying to say with our gestures. But although gestures might seem natural and universal, just a matter of common sense, few of them besides those that represent basic emotions are innate; most have to be learned. For instance, the "thumbs up" sign, which is associated with praise or approval in the United States, might be interpreted as an obscene or insulting gesture in parts of Asia or South America. Every culture has its own way of expressing praise and insulting others. So before leaving for a country whose culture is unfamiliar, it might be worth finding out whether shaking hands or waving goodbye are appropriate ways to communicate.

Language, probably the most significant component of culture, is what has allowed us to fully develop and express ourselves as human beings and what distinguishes us from all other species on the planet. Although language varies from culture to culture, it is a human universal and present in all societies. It is one of the most complex, fluid, and creative symbol systems: letters are combined to form words, and words combined to form sentences, in an almost infinite number of possible ways.

:-)	= Smile
:-(	= Frown
;-)	= Wink
:-P	= Tongue Out
:-D	= Laughing
:-[	= Embarrassed
:-\	= Undecided
=-O	= Surprise
:-*	= Kiss
>:o	= Yell
8-)	= Cool
:-$	= Money Mouth
:-!	= Foot in mouth
O:-)	= Innocent
:'(	= Cry
:-X	= Lips are Sealed

Emoticons Symbolic communication takes many forms. As we communicate more frequently through electronic devices, we develop quick symbolic shortcuts like these emoticons to articulate more complex thoughts and feelings.



Gestures and Body Language If you travel to a foreign culture, pay special attention to how others interpret your body language. Common friendly gestures in one culture can be offensive or confusing in another.

Language is the basis of symbolic culture and the primary means through which we communicate with one another. It allows us to convey complicated abstract concepts and to pass along a culture from one generation to the next. Language helps us to conceive of the past and to plan for the future; to categorize the people, places, and things around us; and to share our perspectives on reality. In this way, the cumulative experience of a group of people—their culture—can be contained in and presented through language.

Language is so important that many have argued that it shapes not only our communication but our perception—the way that we see things—as well. In the 1930s, two anthropologists, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, conducted research on the impact of language on the mind. In working with the Hopi in the American Southwest, the anthropologists claimed to have discovered that the Hopi had no words to distinguish the past, present, or future and that therefore they did not "see" or experience time in the same way as those whose language provided such words. The result of this research was what is known as the **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** (sometimes referred to as the principle of linguistic relativity), which, breaking with traditional understandings about language, asserts that language actually structures thought, that perception not only suggests the need for words with which to express what is perceived but also that the words themselves help create those same perceptions (Sapir 1949; Whorf 1956).

The studies by Sapir and Whorf were not published until the 1950s, when they were met with competing linguistic theories. In particular, the idea that Eskimos (or Inuits, as they are now called) had many more words for snow than people of Western cultures was sharply challenged, as was the notion that Hopi had no words for future or past tense (Martin 1986; Pullum 1991). But although there is still some disagreement about how strongly language influences thought (Edgerton 1992), the ideas behind the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis continue to influence numerous social thinkers. Language does play a significant role in how people construct a sense of reality and how they categorize the people, places, and things around them. For instance, the work of sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel (2003) looks at how different groups (like Jews and Arabs, or Serbs and Croats) use language to construct an understanding of their heritage—through what he calls "social memory." In a country like the United States, where there are approximately 50 million foreign-born people who speak well over 100 different languages, there are bound to be differences in perceptual realities as a result.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis the idea that language structures thought and that ways of looking at the world are embedded in language

Does the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis hold true for your world? Let's take an example closer to home. Perhaps you have seen the 2004 movie *Mean Girls*, loosely based on a pop sociology book by Rosalind Wiseman, *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, about the culture of high school girls (2002). Both book and film present a social map of the cafeteria and school grounds, identifying where different groups of students—the "jocks," "cheerleaders," "goths," "preppies," "skaters," "nerds," "hacky-sack kids," "easy girls," and "partiers"—hang out. The book also includes the "populars" (referred to in the movie as the "plastics") and the popular "wannabes."

You were probably aware of similar categories for distinguishing groups at your school. Do such classification systems influence the way you see other people? Do



***Mean Girls* and the Cafeteria Classification System** This map from the film *Mean Girls* is an example of how we use different classification schemes to identify and categorize the world around us. Do these classification systems influence the way that you see other people?

they lead you to identify people by type and place them into those categories? If no such labels existed, would you still perceive your former classmates the same way? Probably not. These kinds of questions highlight how important language is to the meanings we give to our everyday world.

Values, Norms, and Sanctions

Values and norms are symbolic culture in action. When we know the values and norms of a group (and see how they are controlled by sanctions), then we can understand their beliefs and ideals and see the evidence of these throughout their everyday lives.

VALUES **Values** are the set of shared beliefs about what a group of people consider to be worthwhile or desirable in life—what is good or bad, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly. They articulate the essence of everything that a cultural group cherishes in its society. For instance, most Americans value the equality and individual freedoms of democracy. Structural functionalists, like Durkheim, stress the strength of shared values and their role in regulating the behavior of society's members. However, there is not always widespread agreement about which values should represent a society, and values may change or new values may emerge over time. For example, workers' loyalty to their company was once much more important than it currently is. In today's economy, workers realize that they may be "downsized" in times of financial trouble or that they may change careers over the course of their lifetime and hence feel less obligation to an employer.

values ideas about what is desirable or contemptible and right or wrong in a particular group. They articulate the essence of everything that a cultural group cherishes and honors.

norm a rule or guideline regarding what kinds of behavior are acceptable and appropriate within a culture

law a common type of formally defined norm, providing an explicit statement about what is permissible and what is illegal in a given society

folkway a loosely enforced norm involving common customs, practices, or procedures that ensure smooth social interaction and acceptance

more a norm that carries great moral significance, is closely related to the core values of a cultural group, and often involves severe repercussions for violators

taboo a norm ingrained so deeply that even thinking about violating it evokes strong feelings of disgust, horror, or revulsion

NORMS **Norms** are the rules and guidelines regarding what kinds of behavior are acceptable; they develop directly out of a culture's value system. Whether legal regulations or just social expectations, norms are largely agreed upon by most members of a group. Some norms are *formal*, or officially codified. These include **laws** (such as those making it illegal to speed in a school zone or drink before you turn twenty-one), rules for playing basketball or for membership at your local gym, the Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, and the behavioral prescriptions conveyed in the Ten Commandments. Despite the relative authority of formal norms, they are not *always* followed.

Other norms are *informal*, meaning that they are implicit and unspoken. For instance, when we wait in line to buy tickets for a movie, we expect that no one will cut in front of us. Informal norms are so much a part of our assumptions about life that they are embedded in our consciousness; they cover almost every aspect of our social lives, from what we say and do to even how we think and feel. Though we might have difficulty listing all the norms that are a part of everyday life, most of us have learned them quite well. They are simply "the way things are done." Often, it is only when norms are broken (as when someone cuts in line) that we recognize they exist. You learned this firsthand in the "doing nothing" experiment in Chapter 1's Data Workshop.

Norms can be broken down further in three ways. **Folkways** are the ordinary conventions of everyday life and are not strictly enforced. Examples are standards of dress and rules of etiquette: in most places, wearing flip-flops with a tuxedo is just not done! When people do not conform to folkways, they are thought of as peculiar or eccentric but not really dangerous. **Mores** are norms that carry a greater moral significance and are more closely related to the core values of a cultural group. Unlike folkways, mores are norms to which we all are expected to conform. Breaches are treated seriously and often bring severe repercussions. Such mores as the prohibition of theft, rape, and murder are also formalized, so that there is not only public condemnation for such acts but also strict laws against them. **Taboos**, a type of more, are the most powerful of all norms. We sometimes use the word in a casual way to indicate, say, a forbidden subject. But as a sociological term it holds even greater meaning. Taboos are extremely serious. Sociologists say that our sense of what is taboo is so deeply ingrained that the very thought of committing a taboo act, such as cannibalism or incest, evokes strong feelings of disgust or horror.

Norms are specific to a culture, time period, and situation. What would be a folkway to one group might be a more to another. For instance, public nudity is acceptable in many cultures, whereas it is not only frowned upon in American culture but also illegal in most instances. At the same time, Americans do permit nudity in such situations as strip clubs and nudist resorts, allowing for a kind of moral holiday from the strictures of imposed norms. At certain times like Mardi Gras and spring break, mild norm violations are tolerated. Certain places may also lend themselves to the suspension of norms—think Las Vegas (and the slogan: "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas").



Norms Are Specific to a Situation, Culture, and Time Period For example, at Mardi Gras or during spring break trips, mild norm violations are tolerated.

Similarly, what would be considered murder on the city streets might be regarded as valor on the battlefield. And we are probably all aware of how the folkways around proper etiquette and attire can vary greatly from one generation to the next; fifty years ago, girls would never wear jeans to school, for example.

SANCTIONS **Sanctions** are a means of enforcing norms. They include rewards for conformity and punishments for violations. *Positive sanctions* express approval and may come in the form of a handshake or a smile, praise, or perhaps an award. *Negative sanctions* express disapproval and may come in the form of a frown, harsh words, or perhaps a fine or incarceration.

From a functionalist perspective, we can see how sanctions help to establish **social control**, ensuring that people behave to some degree in acceptable ways and thus promoting social cohesion. There are many forms of authority in our culture—from the government and police to school administrators, work supervisors, and even parents. Each has a certain amount of power that they can exercise to get others to follow their rules. So when someone is caught violating a norm, there is usually some prescribed sanction that will then be administered, serving as a deterrent to that behavior.

But equally important in maintaining social order is the process of socialization by which people internalize norms. For instance, in 1983, the U.S. Department of Transportation pioneered the slogan "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk"; over the years, the slogan has helped change the way we think about our personal responsibility for others, with nearly 80 percent of Americans now claiming that they have taken action to prevent someone from driving while intoxicated. What began as an external statement of a social more quickly became our own personal sense of morality. We are often unaware of the extent to which our own conscience acts to keep us from violating social norms in the first place. If we have internalized norms, then outside sanctions are no longer needed to make us do the right thing. Social control, then, frequently looks like self control.

Variations in Culture

For instance, sociologists who have tried to identify the core values that make up American society (Williams 1965; Bellah et al. 1985) have found that while there do seem to be certain beliefs that most Americans share, such as freedom and democracy, there are also inconsistencies between such beliefs as individualism (in which we do what is best for ourselves) and humanitarianism (in which we do what is best for others), and between equality and group superiority. New values such as self-fulfillment and environmentalism could also be added to the list, having gained popularity in recent years.

It is even difficult to speak of an "American culture." *Cultural diversity* and *multiculturalism* have both become buzzwords in the past few decades, precisely because people are aware of the increasing variety of cultural groups within American society. **Multiculturalism** gen erally describes a policy that involves honoring the diverse racial, ethnic, national, and linguistic backgrounds of various individuals and

sanction positive or negative reactions to the ways that people follow or disobey norms, including rewards for conformity and punishments for norm violations

social control the formal and informal mechanisms used to increase conformity to values and norms and thus increase social cohesion

multiculturalism a policy that values diverse racial, ethnic, national, and linguistic backgrounds and so encourages the retention of cultural differences within society rather than assimilation

In Relationships

Institutional Values and College Life

As a college student, you may live on campus or make use of the student health services. In doing either of these things, you are in a situation in which someone else's values (in this case, those of the college) can influence your individual choices. For example, even if you get to choose your own roommate, the university has adopted a set of values that narrows your choice for you before you even make it. And if your student health service is operated by an outside contractor (for example, the local Catholic hospital), there may be constraints placed on the type of reproductive health services you can receive there.

Rules like these come from a tradition in which the university acts *in loco parentis*—in place of the parents—to protect and provide moral guidance for its students. The Bradley University Student Handbook for 1952–53, for example, forbids women from entering men's residences at any time and places severe constraints on when and under what conditions men may enter women's residences. This same handbook lists a complicated procedure for female students to follow in order to attend off-campus events in the evenings, and there are even lists of appropriate attire for the classroom, athletic events, and other university functions.

While most universities have abandoned the strict behavior codes that were once widespread, they still act *in loco parentis* in a variety of ways. One of them is the restrictions they place on different-sex roommates, even in coed dorms. The university has taken on the job of protecting students from the apparently undesirable consequences of living with a romantic partner. And if the student health service limits your access to certain means of birth control, then choices about whom to live with, how to conduct your sex life, and how to include your romantic partner in your domestic life have already been made for you by the university. If you want to live in university housing and use student health services, you must accept the constraints imposed by university values, even if you do not share those values. If you want to live without those constraints then you must choose to live in a private, off-campus setting.

groups. In following chapters, we will explore some of these differences in greater depth.

Dominant Culture

Although *culture* is a term we usually apply to an entire group of people, what we find in reality is that there are often many subgroups within a larger culture, each with its own particular makeup. These subgroups, however, are not all equal. Some, by virtue of size, wealth, or historical happenstance, are able to lay claim to greater power and influence in society than others. The values, norms, and practices of the most powerful groups are referred to as the mainstream or **dominant culture**, while others are seen as "alternative" or minority views. The power of the dominant culture may mean that other ways of seeing and doing things are relegated to second-class status—in this way, dominant culture can produce cultural **hegemony**, or dominance (Gramsci 1985, 1988).

dominant culture the values, norms, and practices of the group within society that is most powerful (in terms of wealth, prestige, status, influence, etc.)

hegemony term developed by Antonio Gramsci to describe the cultural aspects of social control, whereby the ideas of the dominant social group are accepted by all of society

Let's take popular music as an example. Commercial radio stations often have very limited playlists. No matter what the format (country, pop, hip-hop, metal), the songs you can listen to are determined by station and record company business interests, not your artistic preferences. Truly new artists and alternative sounds can be heard only on public, college, or pirate radio stations or online—and these outlets have significantly fewer financial resources and reach far fewer listeners. The dominant status of commercial radio and the corporate interests of the music industry dictate that musicians outside the mainstream like Firekites, The Tunics, and Ra Ra Riot will never be as big as Beyoncé or Justin Timberlake.

Subcultures

If sociologists focus only on the dominant culture in American society, we risk overlooking the inequalities that structure our society—as well as the influences that even nondominant cultural groups can exert. The United States is filled with thousands of nondominant groups, any of which could be called a **subculture**—a culture within a culture. A subculture is a particular social world that has a distinctive way of life, including its own set of values and norms, practices, and beliefs, but that exists harmoniously within the larger mainstream culture. A subculture can be based on ethnicity, age, interests, or anything else that draws individuals together. Any of the following groups could be considered subcultures within American society: Korean Americans, senior citizens, snowboarders, White Sox fans, greyhound owners, firefighters, Trekkers.

Countercultures

A **counterculture**, another kind of subgroup, differs from a subculture in that its norms and values are often incompatible with or in direct opposition to the mainstream (Zellner 1995). Some countercultures are political or activist groups attempting to bring about social change; others resist mainstream values by living outside society or practicing an alternative lifestyle. In the 1960s, hippies, antiwar protestors, feminists, and others in the so-called political left were collectively known as "the counterculture." But radicals come in many stripes. Any group that opposes the dominant culture, whether they are eco-terrorists, computer hackers, or modern-day polygamists, can be considered a counterculture.

In the mid-1990s, American countercultures of the far right gained prominence with the revelation that the main perpetrator of the April 1995 bombing of the Alfred R. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Timothy McVeigh, had ties to "militia" or "patriot" groups. And he wasn't the only one. In 1996, the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks such groups, counted 858 active groups in the United States belonging to the "militia movement" (the number was reduced to 171 in 2003). Members of this movement, who trace their heritage to the Minutemen of the American Revolution (an elite fighting force, the first to arrive at a battle), saw themselves as the last line of defense for the liberties provided in the U.S. Constitution. They believed, moreover, that the federal government had become the enemy of those liberties. They held that gun control, environmental protection laws, and other legislation violated individual and states' rights and that events like the FBI's 1993 siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas (resulting in 82 deaths), called for armed grassroots organization.

Since the Oklahoma City bombing, some militia groups have courted recognition as legitimate American institutions rather than radical organizations. Others have remained openly countercultural. While members of such groups consider themselves "patriots" and "true Americans," they believe that the institutions and values of contemporary American society need drastic revision.

subculture a group within society that is differentiated by its distinctive values, norms, and lifestyle

counterculture a group within society that openly rejects and/or actively opposes society's values and norms



Old and New Countercultures The Black Panther Party, which was founded by Huey Newton, is an example of a social movement from the 1960s counterculture. New countercultures can include polygamist families like Tom Green and his five wives.



Principles and Practices—Values, Norms, and Laws in Flux

1770: George Washington and Thomas Jefferson grow hemp (*cannabis sativa*, the botanical classification for marijuana) on their Virginia plantations. Hemp was used to make fabric, rope, and paper, including the paper on which Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence.

1937: In schools across the United States, students watch a scholastic film called *Reefer Madness*, an antimarijuana propaganda piece that uses images of insanity, rape, and murder to paint a picture of pot as a catastrophic scourge on society. Every state in the country outlaws the use of marijuana as an intoxicant, and hemp farming is effectively eliminated at the federal level by the passage of the prohibitive Marijuana Tax Act.

1992: Arkansas governor and presidential candidate Bill Clinton admits on MTV's *Rock the Vote/Choose or Lose* that he smoked marijuana in college but "didn't inhale" (Schlosser 2003).

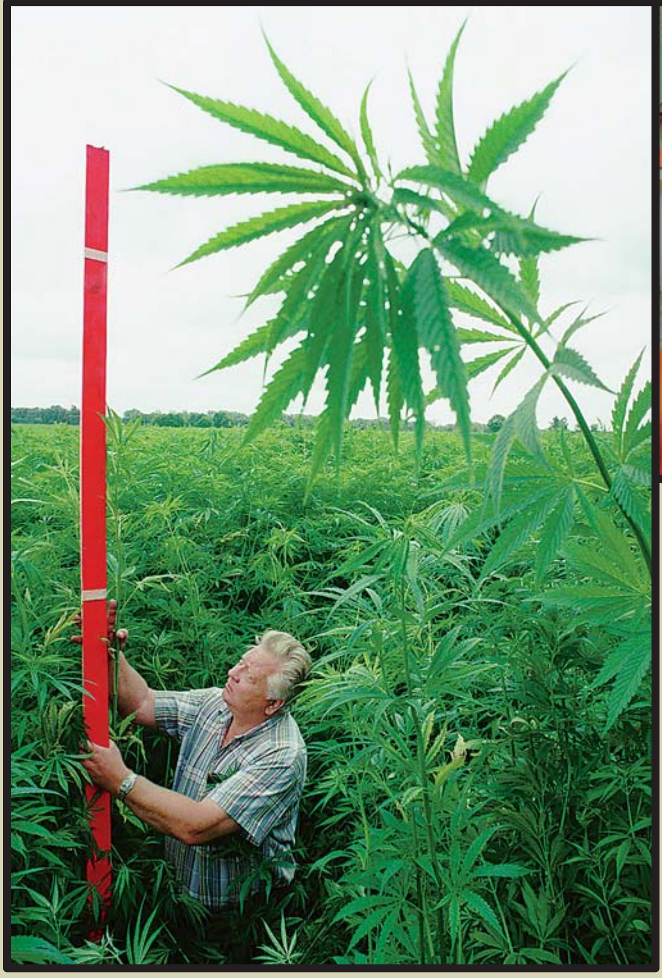


He "Didn't Inhale" Bill Clinton appears on MTV with young voters during his first presidential campaign in 1992.

2002: A number of states, including California, Colorado, Illinois, New York, and Ohio, decriminalize marijuana use and possession to varying degrees, including allowing the medical use of marijuana for cancer and AIDS patients. However, other states such as Oklahoma and Indiana punish mere possession of marijuana with long prison sentences, up to and including life without parole. In some cases, selling marijuana can be punished more harshly than rape or murder (Schlosser 2003).



Reefer Madness This cautionary film from 1937 was shown to students to warn them about the dangers of marijuana, including rape, insanity, and murder.





Hemp Can Be Used to Make Fabric, Rope, and Paper This farmer measures crops to see if they are ready for harvesting. Kim Roberts helps a customer at her store, All about Hemp, which sells hemp-based products including shoes, clothing, and shampoo.

2005: The Supreme Court rules that federal antidrug laws can be used to prosecute those involved in cultivating and prescribing marijuana for medical purposes, even in states that have legalized the practice.

2008: Massachusetts representative Barney Frank introduces a federal marijuana decriminalization bill to Congress.

As you can see, American values and norms surrounding the various uses of *cannabis sativa* have shifted over time and sometimes seem downright contradictory. The very first marijuana-related law *required* Virginia colonists to grow hemp in 1619 (Schlosser 2003, p. 19); by 1937, all its uses were outlawed. Today, we confront a kind of cultural schizophrenia about marijuana—our desire to benefit from its helpful properties is matched only by our fear of its harmful ones. Should we allow hemp farming to stop the clear-cutting of ancient forests by the paper industry? Should we allow restricted marijuana use to relieve the suffering of cancer, AIDS, epilepsy, and glaucoma patients, as medical research suggests? Or should we treat pot as we treat other illegal drugs like crack cocaine and heroin, by severely punishing those who grow, buy, and sell it? Isn't there some middle ground?

The case of changing marijuana laws serves as an example of an important cultural principle: what was once mainstream may later be defined as deviant; what is now seen as deviant may someday be normal and acceptable. Why? Because values change over time and differ across cultures. Changing values lead to changing laws and changing practices in our everyday lives.

Are there any current counterculture values that you think might someday enter the mainstream? No matter how dangerous or threatening they may seem now, it is entirely possible that they will be taken for granted as normal in 10, 25, 50, or 100 years. And what about the mainstream values that we currently take for granted? In a decade or a century, some will be rejected as aberrant. It's hard to imagine right now . . . but history tells us it will most definitely happen.

culture wars clashes within mainstream society over the values and norms that should be upheld

ideal culture the norms, values, and patterns of behavior that members of a society believe should be observed in principle

real culture the norms, values, and patterns of behavior that actually exist within a society (which may or may not correspond to the society's ideals)

At the furthest extreme are militia groups who hold that the present American government is entirely illegitimate and that they are not its subjects but rather "sovereign citizens," "common-law citizens," or "freemen." Members refuse to carry documents such as driver's licenses and social security cards and refuse to pay taxes or observe any government restrictions on their property. They have gone so far as to establish "common-law courts" that oppose local and federal government regulations and seek to prosecute government officials (Diamond 1995). They also often train in "survivalist" tactics, preparing for a more cataclysmic confrontation with the government. And in an interesting example of the influence of countercultural values on the mainstream, many ordinary Americans found themselves adopting "survivalist" attitudes in preparation for the disastrous social breakdowns predicted at the beginning of 2000 (Y2K). Many stocked up on supplies such as freeze-dried foods, electrical generators, and weapons for self-defense, ordering from suppliers who had previously only catered to the countercultures of the far right.

Culture Wars

Although a countercultural group can pose a threat to the larger society, conflict does not always come from the extreme margins of society; it can also emerge from within the mainstream. Culture in any diverse society is characterized by points of tension and division. There is not always uniform agreement about which values and norms ought to be upheld. The term **culture wars** is often used to describe the clashes that arise as a result (Bloom 1987; Garber 1998). The clashes are frequently played out in the media, where social commentators and pundits debate the issues. Culture wars are mainly waged over values and morality and the solutions to social problems, with liberals and conservatives fighting to define culture in America. One notable example of a battle in the culture wars was a speech given by then Vice-President Dan Quayle in 1992, in which he condemned the fictional TV character Murphy Brown for "choosing" single parenthood; another is the scuffle over media and morality that surrounded singer Janet Jackson's breast-baring during the 2004 Super Bowl telecast. Other questions of family values, changing gender roles, frontiers in bioethics, violence in the media, and school prayer have all been recent topics for discussion. Culture wars are bound to continue as we confront the difficult realities that are a part of living in a democratic society.

Ideal vs. Real Culture

Some norms and values are more aspired to than actually practiced. It is useful to draw a distinction between **ideal culture**, the norms and values that members of a society believe should be observed in principle, and **real culture**, the patterns of behavior that actually exist. Whether it is an



Culture Wars Often Play Out on Early-Morning or Late-Night Television George Stephanopoulos (second from left) spends every Sunday morning interviewing politicians on *This Week with George Stephanopoulos*. On weeknights, comedian Jon Stewart (far right) hosts *The Daily Show*, which satirizes the network news and levels comedic criticisms against mainstream media and politics.

organization that falls short of its own mission statement or a person who says one thing and does another (a devout Catholic, for example, who finds himself seeking a divorce), what we believe in and what we do may be two different things.

Let's take, as another example, corporate culture in America. The ideal culture of the workplace usually dictates that raises and promotions be given to employees who have demonstrated exemplary performance or productiveness through skill, dedication, or innovative thinking. In practice, these rewards are also given to less deserving employees who are appreciated for other qualities such as obedience, charisma, or their special relationship with the boss. While most people believe that hard work or initiative should be what determines success, they know that in reality it is not always these qualities that are rewarded and that indeed sometimes employees climb the ladder for more dubious reasons (Hagberg and Heifetz 2002).

Another example of how real and ideal culture may clash in the workplace comes from a management book called *Weird Ideas That Work*, by Stanford professor Robert Sutton (2001), who observes that while corporate executives often claim they value innovation, they usually reward conformity instead. Sutton recommends that instead of hiring comfortable, familiar types of people who know the rules and submit without argument to the authority of their superiors, corporations should hire eccentrics who ignore the rules, enjoy a good fight, and defy authority. For those who claim they value creativity, Sutton argues this is the only way to really achieve their ideals.

High, Low, and Popular Culture

Culture wars can be fought just about anywhere. In the summer of 1998, an exhibit opened at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City that was uniformly panned by the critics. The *New Republic* called the exhibit "a pop nostalgia orgy masquerading as a major artistic statement," and *Salon*'s art critic accused the Guggenheim of "wear[ing] its cultural pants around its ankles" and "sucking down to our lowest impulses." What were they so upset about?

The exhibit was entitled "The Art of the Motorcycle," and the critics were upset because motorcycles weren't, in their opinion, art. The public, on the other hand, loved it—the exhibit broke all previous museum attendance records. People who might never otherwise have set foot in the museum came to view this colorful collection of motorcycles dating from 1868 to 1998.

popular culture usually contrasted with the high culture of elite groups; forms of cultural expression usually associated with the masses, consumer goods, and commercial products

high culture those forms of cultural expression usually associated with the elite or dominant classes

The motorcycles at the Guggenheim stirred up a long-standing debate that questioned the very definitions of art and culture. The critics' objections were based on their perception that **popular culture**, or mass culture (motorcycles), had invaded a **high culture** venue (the Guggenheim Museum). In this case, popular culture was seen as unsavory and even dangerous—the implication being that pop culture is a mass phenomenon that somehow threatens the position of the elites by challenging their preferences. As with so many sociological concepts, these terms come originally from the German; in this case, *kultur* (the culture of the elite classes) and *massenkultur* (the culture of the masses). But are these two categories really that separate?

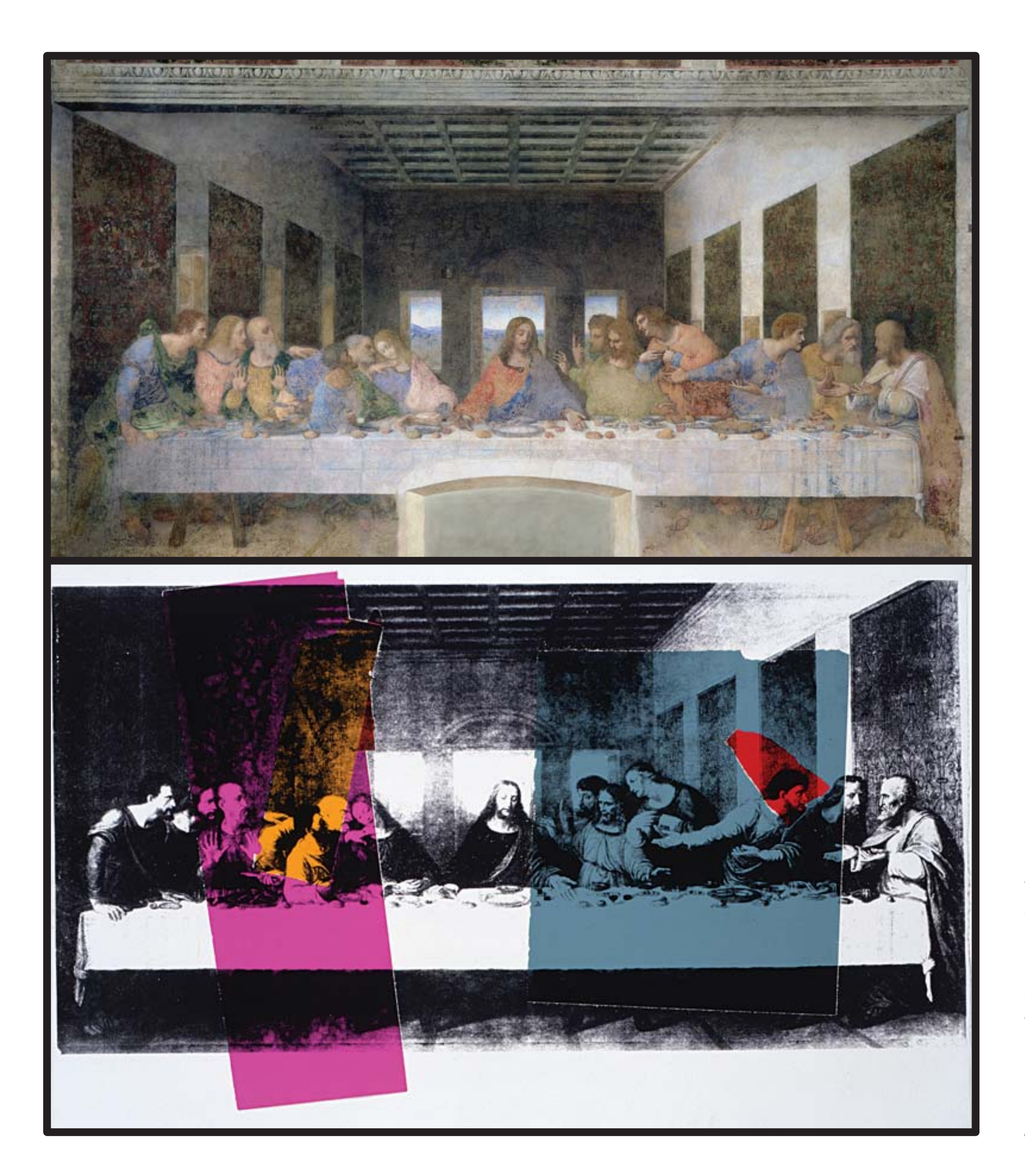
First, there are multiple high cultures and multiple pop cultures, based on differences in taste and aesthetics. Also, each category has its own set of hierarchies. For example,



Is This Art? The 1998 show "The Art of the Motorcycle" at the Guggenheim Museum in New York broke attendance records but attracted negative reviews from art critics for "sucking down to our lowest impulses."

rap and hip-hop music are definitely pop culture phenomena. Produced by mostly minority artists for whom "street credibility" is one of the most important qualifications, these musical forms have widespread popular appeal, especially among teenagers and young adults. But rap and hip-hop have their own elites, artists who are at the top of the charts and who have a great deal of influence within and outside their pop culture domain. Examples such as Sean "Diddy" Combs, Queen Latifah, Kanye West, and Jay-Z, the elites of the rap and hip-hop worlds, show that the distinction between mass and elite is a fuzzy one.

There is another way in which this distinction is problematic. In the real world, most cultural products contain elements of both mass and high culture. Why do you think we call certain TV programs soap "operas"? The storylines and intense emotions of *All My Children* parallel and sometimes rival those of Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Led Zeppelin and Van Halen songs, when written out in standard musical notation, show a recognizable symphonic structure. Rap and hip-hop overtly draw on other types of music in the practice of sampling, and Ludwig von Beethoven, Georges Bizet, and



High Art and Pop Art Are Not Mutually Exclusive Even though Warhol's work is now exhibited in high culture venues like esteemed modern art museums, he was perceived as a threat to the "real" art world when he began his work in the 1960s. At bottom is Warhol's subversion of a high art masterpiece, Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* (above).

Béla Bartók have all been sampled by R&B artists. These examples, and many others, indicate that high and pop culture are not mutually exclusive and can coexist within the same product.

The distinctions between high and popular culture are based on the characteristics of their audiences. Differences of class, education, race, and even religion help create these categories. Sociologist Herbert Gans (1999) calls the groups of people who share similar artistic, recreational, and intellectual interests **taste publics**. Taste publics aren't necessarily organized groups, but they do inhabit the same aesthetic worlds, which Gans calls **taste cultures**—that is, people who share the same tastes will also usually move in the same cultural circles as well. For example, sociologist David Halle (1993) found that members of the upper class are more likely to have abstract paintings hanging in their homes, while members of the working class are more likely to display family photographs in their homes.

The music, movies, clothes, foods, art, books, magazines, cars, sports, and television programs you enjoy are influenced at least in part by your position in society. Unknowingly, you belong to a number of taste publics and inhabit a number of taste cultures, in that you share your interests with others who are similar to you sociologically. What you think of as your own unique individual preferences are in some ways predetermined by your age, race, class and education levels, and regional location.

Polysemy, Audiences, and Fans

The saga of the motorcycles at the Guggenheim should help us understand an important concept in the study of culture: polysemy. Sociologists use the term **polysemy** to describe how any cultural product is subject to multiple interpretations and hence has many possible meanings (Hall 1980; Fiske 1989). For instance, a cartoon like *The Simpsons* can be enjoyed on a variety of levels, by children and adults, for its humor alone and for its political commentary. Polysemy helps us understand how one person can absolutely love the same movie (or song, painting, cartoon, necklace, car, meal, or tattoo) that another person absolutely hates. Meaning is not a given, nor is it entirely open—we make meaning individually and together, as audiences and consumers of culture.

Some researchers have been concerned with whether popular culture can cause certain types of behavior (Gerbner and Gross 1976; Gerbner et al. 1980; Malamuth and Donnerstein 1984; Weinstein 1991, 2000). Do TV crime shows increase our propensity to violence? Do pornographic magazines lead to the abuse of women? Does heavy metal music make teenagers suicidal? Such questions suggest that cultural products impose their intrinsic meanings on their audiences in a simplistic, stimulus-and-response fashion. But while it is true that mass media products are potentially powerful transmitters of cultural values and norms, the process is neither immediate nor uncomplicated. As we know, audiences come from different backgrounds, which help define experiences and interpret the cultural products we consume. This makes it more likely, then, that polysemy will come into play: that audience members will interpret the same texts in different ways.

taste publics groups of people who share similar artistic, literary, media, recreational, and intellectual interests

taste cultures areas of culture that share similar aesthetics and standards of taste

polysemy having many possible meanings or interpretations

interpretive community a group of people dedicated to the consumption and interpretation of a particular cultural product and who create a collective, social meaning for the product

One way we can make meaning together is by being part of an **interpretive community**, a group specifically dedicated to the consumption and interpretation of a particular cultural product. For example, let's say you get together with friends every week to watch *Lost*. You enjoy discussing the intrigue surrounding Jack, Sawyer, Hurley, Kate, and the others while the show is on and at other times during the week (perhaps in e-mails). Indeed, if you have to skip an episode for some reason, you must be brought up to date by one of your comrades. Alternatively, you could visit the network's official website and get caught up there, or visit one of the many fan websites where you can interact with other fans. And there you have it—you're part of an interpretive community! By consuming a cultural product as a group, members make its meaning collective rather than individual and can influence each other's cultural experience.

We may acknowledge that things like watching soap operas, reading comic books, and playing video games are trivial in the larger scheme of things, but if these forms of pop culture give us pleasure and connect us with others, they may not be so trivial after all. Serious sociological insights can be gained from studying what appear to be superficial pursuits (Postman 1987; Schudson 2003). In fact, we will devote an entire chapter to leisure and recreation later in the book. Culture is actually serious business.



Elvis's Art World A huge network of people contributed to Elvis's art world, ranging from fans to instrument manufacturers and including hundreds of musical influences.

The Business of Culture

Your choices of CDs, clothing, and cheeseburgers are not made from an infinite set of options; rather they are made from a circumscribed set of possibilities determined by organizations whose interests may be very different from yours.

How do cultural products get produced? When it comes to products related to art or music, we often think of them as divinely inspired by a uniquely talented individual. Howard Becker (1982), however, proposes that whatever the individual talent, art is a collective activity. There's a whole world of people whose collective activities contribute to the making of any piece of art. These people are linked together as part of an **art world**, even if they never meet and even if they live in different societies and different historical times.

art world the group composed of everyone involved in the creation, distribution, and consumption of any cultural product

Let's take as an example the "King of Rock and Roll," Elvis Presley, born January 8, 1935. Elvis's talent, charisma, and handsome features played an important role in his successful career but were only part of what made him a worldwide legend. Many other people, both known and unknown to the King, were instrumental in the production of his music. For example, on his eleventh birthday, Elvis begged for a .22-caliber rifle but was given a guitar instead—for that, we have his parents Gladys and Vernon Presley to thank. Then there was record producer Sam Phillips, who recorded the singer at his Sun Studios in Memphis. Elvis's career might never have gotten off the ground had it not been for another Phillips, Dewey, the first DJ ever to play a Presley record on the radio. There was also Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis's colorful manager and promoter, who booked all his gigs and negotiated all his record deals.

But those are the more obvious members of the Elvis art world. Much of his best work was done in what is called a "rockabilly" style, which is a combination of black R&B, white country and hillbilly music, and hard-driving rock and roll; thousands of musicians contributed those musical influences. Anyone who ever manufactured, packaged, delivered, sold, or bought an Elvis record, anyone who swooned at his concerts or protested his music, is also part of this art world. The inventors and makers of guitars, drums, and other instruments used by Elvis and his bands are part of this art world as well, as are the technicians who worked in the recording studios and performance venues. Even the people who cleaned his homes, washed his cars, cut his hair, laundered his clothes, cooked his meals, and made his travel arrangements—all so he could have more free time to create—are members of his art world.

The production of art and culture is thus a social phenomenon just like any other and is empirically analyzable from a sociological perspective. We no longer need to romanticize creativity or see it as exclusively mystical or inexplicable. We'll spend more time on the subject in Chapter 14.

DATA WORKSHOP



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Seeing Culture in Popular Magazines

Picture a "high culture" evening: aristocrats in gowns and tuxedos, dining on caviar and truffles served by a white-gloved staff, in a grand mansion with an expansive ocean view. Now picture a "pop" culture evening: neighbors in shorts and T-shirts gnawing on juicy ribs, wiping their mouths with paper napkins, at a cook-out in the backyard of a suburban tract home. These images seem very different, but they have one thing in common: culture shapes each of them.

In this Data Workshop, you will use existing sources—in this case, popular magazines—to discover how culture gives meaning to our instinctive drives for food and shelter. You will use content analysis to study the magazines and arrive at some conclusions. You may want to refer back to Chapter 3 to re-read the section on existing sources, just for a quick review.

Pick your drive—food or shelter. Now go to your local bookstore or newsstand, and identify three magazines that are dedicated to that particular drive. For instance, *Bon Appetit*, *Gourmet*, or *Saveur* (food); or *Architectural Digest*, *Metropolitan Home*, or *This Old House* (shelter); other magazines, such as *Martha Stewart Living*, cover both of these territories. Immerse yourself in the content of each magazine, then answer the following questions. Support your answers with data (like clippings of photos or articles) from the magazines.

- How much of what is contained in these magazines is really necessary to sustain life?
- Do any of the magazines feature articles about the bare minimum of nourishment or shelter (plain rice; a tent or shack)? If so, how do they present these topics ("High-End Camping Gear," "The Jasmine Rice of My Burmese Childhood")?
- What types of regional or national differences in food and housing are revealed?
- What types of products and services are advertised?
- What elements of material and symbolic culture are visible?
- What types of values and beliefs are embedded in the recipes, entertaining tips, home improvement plans, or decorating schemes?
- How does the content of these magazines reflect the specific cultural context in which they are produced?
- How does the content affect you and your desires? Do you find yourself craving the meals pictured or wishing you lived in the beautiful homes in the photographs?
- Who benefits when you act out these desires by purchasing the goods and services presented (a package of sun-dried tomatoes, a meal at a featured restaurant, a new shower curtain, a can of paint)—or even the magazines themselves?

Finally, which force is more important in shaping human behavior when it comes to food and shelter—instinct or culture?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Jot down notes based on your answers to the questions above, and cut out pictures and articles that help support your observations. Then get together in small groups to share your findings.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Translate those jotted notes into a three- to four-page essay, supplemented with clippings that help support your points. Make sure you address the questions posed above in your essay.

Cultural Change

Cultures usually change slowly and incrementally, although change can also happen in rapid and dramatic ways. We saw rapid change as a result of the social movements of the 1960s, and we may be seeing it again, albeit for different reasons, as we move through the early part of the 2000s. Change is usually thought of as "progress"—we move from what seem to be outmoded ways of doing things to more innovative practices. Earlier in the chapter, we saw how variations in culture, whether they resulted from multiculturalism, countercultures, or culture wars, could all lead to growth and change in the larger society. Now we look at several other important processes that can also contribute to cultural change.

Technological Change

One of the most significant influences on any society is its material culture. And most changes in material culture tend to be technological. We usually equate **technology** with new "hi-tech" electronic or digital devices. But technology can be anything from a hammer to the space shuttle, from graffiti to hypertext markup language (HTML), as well as the "know-how" it takes to use them.

New technology often provides the basis and structure through which culture is disseminated to members of a social group. For instance, we are currently living in the digital age or Information Age, a revolutionary time in history spurred by the invention of the microchip. This technology has already produced radical changes in society, much as the steam engine did during the industrial revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

One of the most prominent features of this Information Age is the spread of mass media. It was not until the 1950s that television

technology material artifacts and the knowledge and techniques required to use them

technological determinism the notion that developments in material culture provide the primary driving forces behind social organization and social change

cultural diffusion the dissemination of beliefs and practices from one group to another

became a regular part of daily life in America, and only in the 1990s that the internet became commonplace. Most of us now would have trouble remembering life before these technological advancements; that's how much we rely on them and take them for granted. This digital revolution is shaping our culture—and the rest of the world's—at an increasingly rapid pace.

Some postmodern theorists argue that the rapid proliferation of new technologies creates a disconnect between old social values (like hard work and thrift) and new cultural ideals like consumerism (Bell 1976). In fact, many social thinkers believe that technology is the single greatest influence on society today, a concept known as **technological determinism** (Veblen 1921/2004). This would mean that computers, and others forms of mass communication, are defining who we become—how we think, feel, and act in the world. Educator Marshall McLuhan, who studied the impact of media technology on human perception, is famous for his assertion that "the medium is the message" (1964). What he meant is that it is not so much the content (for instance, the advertisement, sit-com, or song) with which we should be concerned, but rather the medium itself (radio, television, or the internet), through which the content is delivered. The medium is what actually has the greater power to change our cultural framework.

This is an important proposition to consider in our increasingly "wired" world. We can now be in almost constant contact with each other and with sources of information and entertainment. But media and information technology also have the potential to distort our sense of time and space, identity and reality. The Information Age has not arrived without great cultural consequence.



Shoppers at a New Gap Store in Shinjuku, Downtown Tokyo, Japan As global capitalism and large multinational corporations become more dominant, we increasingly see the same companies, brands, and products around the world. Is this cultural leveling good or bad?

Cultural Diffusion and Cultural Leveling

Cultural change can also occur when different groups share their material and nonmaterial culture with each other, a process called **cultural diffusion**. Since each culture has its own tools, beliefs, and practices, exposure to another culture may mean that certain aspects of it will then be appropriated. For example, as McDonald's-style restaurants set up shop in cultures where fast food had previously been unknown, it wasn't only hamburgers that got relocated: other aspects of fast-food culture came along as well. According to Eric Schlosser (2002), during the 1980s Japanese diners doubled their consumption of fast-food meals—and their rates of obesity. Heart disease and stroke risks have also increased. While there is no direct proof of cause and effect here, it is clear that a single cultural product cannot be exported without carrying a raft of cultural consequences with it.

Cultural diffusion usually occurs in the direction from more developed to less developed nations. In particular, "Western" culture has spread rapidly to the rest of the world—driven by capitalism and globalization and aided by new forms of transportation and communication that allow for ever-faster exchanges.

Cultural leveling occurs when cultures that were once distinct become increasingly similar to one another. If you travel, you may have already seen this phenomenon in towns across the United States and countries around the world. The Wal-Marts on the interstates, for instance, have driven independent mom-and-pop stores from town squares all over the country. Many people bemoan this development and the consequent loss of uniqueness and diversity it represents. As cultures begin to blend, new mixes emerge. This can result in an interesting hybrid, for example, of East and West, but can also mean a blander, more diluted culture of sameness. While Western culture is a dominant force in this process, cultural diffusion and cultural leveling do not necessarily have to occur in a one-way direction. Other societies have also had an influence on culture in the United States. For instance, Japanese anime was for many years a fringe interest in America, usually associated with computer geeks and other outsiders; now Hayao Miyazaki, Japan's leading anime filmmaker, has teamed up with Disney to sell his movies (like *Spirited Away* and *Howl's Moving Castle*) to a mainstream American audience. Still, America, the dominant producer of global media, remains the primary exporter of cultural content throughout the world.

Cultural Imperialism

Other countries around the world are becoming inundated with America's television programs, movies, CDs, satellite radio broadcasts, magazines, and web content. You can watch MTV in India and *Superbad* in Uzbekistan, surf the internet in Vietnam, or listen to Justin Timberlake in Morocco. Many see this as good news for the spread of freedom and democracy, for others to have the kind of access to information and entertainment that Americans regularly enjoy. But the media are necessarily a reflection of the culture in which they are produced. So not only are we selling entertainment, we are also implicitly promoting certain Western ideas. And it can become a problem when the images and ideas found in the media conflict with the traditional norms and values of other countries.

The proliferation of Western media amounts to what some social critics call **cultural imperialism** (Schiller 1995). These critics conceive of media as a kind of invading force that enters a country and takes it over—much like an army, but with film, television, music, soft drinks, and running shoes instead of guns. Historically, imperialism involved the conquering of other nations by monarchies for their own glory and enrichment. The British Empire, for example, was once able to use its military might to occupy and control a third of the world's total land area. But now it is possible to cross a border and to occupy a territory culturally, without setting foot on foreign soil. Because they command so many economic resources, Western media companies are powerful enough to create a form of cultural domination wherever their products go.

cultural leveling the process by which cultures that were once distinct become increasingly similar

cultural imperialism the imposition of one culture's beliefs, practices, and artifacts on another culture through mass media and consumer products

Of the countries that consider the messages in Western media dangerous, some forbid or restrict the flow of information, others impose various kinds of censorship, and still others try to promote their own cultural productions. Iran, for example, officially censors all non-Islamic media content on television, radio, film, and the internet (though many Iranians use hidden satellite dishes to plug into illegal Western programming). In the long run, it may be very difficult to prevent cultural imperialism from spreading.

American Culture in Perspective

Because American culture is highly visible worldwide, the country's moral and political values have equally high visibility. That means when reruns of *Friends* or *Grey's Anatomy* air in places like Egypt or Malaysia or Lebanon, American values on the topics of sex, gender, work, and family are being transmitted as well. When military ventures such as Operation Enduring Freedom (in Afghanistan) or Operation Iraqi Freedom are undertaken, part of their mission involves exporting the political values associated with democracy, capitalism, and even Christianity. Well, you may say, *Friends* was funny, and *Grey's* is a great way to kill time. And democracy is a good thing. So what's the problem here?

In some parts of the world, the premise of these shows would be unthinkable in real life: in many traditional cultures, both women and men live with their parents until they marry, sometimes to a partner chosen for them by their family. A show in which young men and women live on their own, with almost no family involvement, dating and sleeping with people to whom they are not married, presents values that are distasteful in these cultures. American values, or at least the perceptions of them shaped by Hollywood and pop-culture exports, can breed negative feelings toward the United States. The value placed on individualism, sexual freedom, and material satisfaction in American life can antagonize cultures that place a higher value on familial involvement and moral and social restraint and may result in anti-American sentiment.

On the Job

U.S. Military

An e-mail from Afghanistan, May 30, 2003:

> A couple of hours after we landed, we had a convoy to Kabul. It took about two hours, but I will never forget the trip. The scenery was incredible. I knew that there were mountains in Afghanistan, but there are so many that it is an unbelievable sight. . . . The native people are also a sight to see. These people are incredibly resourceful making shelter from clay and mud and using the minimal resources they have to work with. (Carroll 2006, p. 67)

Like most Americans, the writer of this e-mail, Army Sergeant Andrew Simkiewicz, had never been to Afghanistan before. His deployment there was part of Operation Enduring Freedom, America's post–September 11th effort to hunt Al Qaeda terrorists, depose Taliban leaders, and find Osama bin Laden. You might not think a soldier would notice the beauty of the Afghan landscape, but soldiers aren't one-dimensional warriors, and their missions aren't solely combat oriented. Wherever they serve, American military personnel have the opportunity to learn about other cultures and to act as representatives of American culture to the people they encounter.

When "in country," soldiers notice the effects of war on the citizens of places like Iraq. They also notice the differences between Iraqis' experiences and those of ordinary Americans at home. Here Army Captain James R. Sosnicky describes an Iraqi woman he knew who sold cigarettes in the Baghdad Green Zone:

> When she was a young girl, Iranian missiles pounded the street. The Americans have bombed her three times since, in 1991, 1998 and 2003. Mariam . . . knows things women her age in the United States do not. A couple of weeks ago I was in Baghdad, visiting with Mariam. There was an explosion in the distance. "What do you think," I asked, "car bomb or mortar round?" "Definitely a mortar round," she replied. Most girls in the U.S. have a tin ear for such things. (Carroll 2006, p. 130)

Soldiers also come to recognize the deep connections and similarities between the people whose territory they occupy and their friends and family members back in the United States, as does Army First Sergeant August C. Hohl, Jr., writing from Afghanistan:

> [T]heir personal and religious beliefs are not unlike ours in that everyone understands the importance of reaching out to and being charitable towards one another. . . . [W]hile we all might live differently due to environmental, geographical and educational conditions, people are basically the same inside. Learning some of the history, social habits, and religion of this country has left me with a profound sense of hope that we can assist the people here. But we're not so smart that we can't learn from them, too. (Carroll 2006, p. 68)

U.S. service personnel represent U.S. culture anywhere they are posted—often in war zones where they may or may not be welcome. So they engage in humanitarian work in addition to their combat assignments—here, Sergeant Simkiewicz tells of breaking Army rules to help Afghan children:

> We were told not to give any of our food or water to the natives. However, I find it hard to see these cute children starving on the side of the road while I have a case of bottled water next to me in the cab. Needless to say, a half dozen of my waters were hurled from my window along the way. (Carroll 2006, p. 67)

Elsewhere in Afghanistan, soldiers like Army Chief Warrant Officer II Jared S. Jones distribute humanitarian aid, "ranging from personal hygiene to school supplies, shoes and soccer balls. It is always a pleasure to see the difference we are making for these people, even if it is only one small village" (Carroll 2006, p. 70). As Chief Warrant Officer Jones reminds us, "combat is only one facet of the military, a necessary evil" (Carroll, 2006, p. 71). Their other roles will include "cultural emissary" and "cultural observer" as well, roles that are just as important—and perhaps even more important—than the role of warrior.

Global Perspective

The Voice of America: Spreading Propaganda or Democratic Values?

The Voice of America (VOA) began in 1942 as a radio news broadcast to parts of Europe and North Africa. Today, it broadcasts in 44 languages, 24 hours a day, around the globe, on radio, TV, and the internet. Whether the broadcasts are in Dari, Amharic, or Macedonian, the VOA claims to provide objective news about the United States and the world, including uncensored news about the host country, whatever its internal politics may be. Some listeners, foreign and domestic, criticize VOA's claims of objectivity, saying that it is American political propaganda; others trust its world news service, even listening in secret in order to find out what is really happening in their own countries and abroad.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

VOA broadcasts, whatever their actual content (which can include music, interviews, and variety shows as well as news), also transmit core American values such as freedom of speech and of the press, human rights, and democratic decision making. To some repressive regimes, these values are seen as dangerous and inflammatory and are held up as evidence of America's cultural imperialism. VOA frequencies are sometimes blocked by those who seek to stifle the ideas VOA communicates. And sometimes VOA listeners are punished for the very act of tuning in.

Burmese human rights activist Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has spent almost 15 years under house arrest at the hands of Myanmar's (Burma's) military dictatorship, was separated from her husband and children in London for even longer, and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her selfless efforts on behalf of Burmese democracy. In a 2000 message to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Suu Kyi told the story of a Burmese man persecuted for merely listening to VOA:

> U Than Chaun, the 70-year-old proprietor of a coffee shop in Schwe-goo township, Kachin state, was arrested and his radio, which was tuned to the Voice of America Burmese broadcast, was seized. . . . [H]e was charged and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. U Than Chaun's wife was suffering from a heart ailment . . . and she passed away while he was in prison. He himself suffers medical problems which have now become life threatening.

She also asks: "In which country of the world are people so oppressed that listening to a radio deserves two years of imprisonment?" The VOA would like the answer to that question to be "none."

Politics can generate the same anti-American feeling. For example, the United States has recently been involved in attempts to stem the development of nuclear weapons in developing countries like Iran and Pakistan while still maintaining our own nuclear arsenal at home. Other nations may question why American politicians think they should be able to withhold from other countries privileges the United States itself enjoys, such as developing a nuclear weapons program. Much of the resentment against America abroad emerges as a result of this type of phenomenon—our perceived failure to live up to our own political values and ideals or to apply them fairly to others.

Putting American culture in perspective means recognizing that because it is pervasive, it may also be viewed with suspicion and even contempt when the values it expresses clash with those of other cultures. But the nature of anti-Americanism is complex—it's not merely a failure by other nations to understand "good" television shows or accept "superior" political systems. There are meaningful cultural differences between Americans and others, and we should keep those differences in mind as we read about or travel to other cultures. Indeed, there are cultural differences of similar magnitude within the United States as well. The question of the meaning of American culture is a complicated one.

TABLE 4.1 ***Theory in Everyday Life***

Perspective	Approach to Culture	Case Study: Religion
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Cultural elements such as values and norms contribute to social stability by constraining individual desires.	Religious prohibitions against premarital sex encourage people to marry and start families, which is functional for society and contributes to social stability.
CONFLICT THEORY	Values and norms can be different within different subgroups, and norms may be applied to different groups unequally. In addition, norms and values may be imported from one group to another, or used by one group to change or control another.	Iran officially censors non-Islamic media to impede the spread of secular, Western values such as sexual freedom or permissiveness that may be embedded in television shows such as *Grey's Anatomy* or *Sex in the City*.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Values and norms are social constructions, created, maintained, and changed through continuing interaction.	Religious rituals are verbal and gestural—in other words, they are interactional. Reciting the Lord's Prayer, bowing toward Mecca, keeping a kosher home—all of these actions and interactions help create meaning for those who practice religion. Interaction creates religious change as well—in 2003 the Episcopal church ordained Gene Robinson, its first gay bishop, after weeks of heated debate.

Closing Comments

In this chapter, we have seen how seemingly simple elements of material culture (cars and comic books) and symbolic culture (norms and values) create complex links between the individual and her society, as well as between different societies around the globe. American culture in particular, sociologists often argue, is hegemonic (dominant), in that certain interests (such as creating a global market for American products) prevail, while others (such as encouraging local development and self-determination) are subordinated. Within the United States, this can mean that the cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices of certain subcultures—such as minority ethnic or religious groups—are devalued. Elsewhere, it can mean that America is accused of cultural imperialism by nations whose values and practices are different than ours.

Whose cultural values and practices are "better" or "right"? The sociological perspective avoids these evaluative terms when examining culture, choosing instead to take a relativistic approach. In other words, different cultures should (in most cases) be evaluated not according to outside standards but according to their own sets of values and norms. But we should always recognize that this commitment to cultural relativism is a value in itself—which makes cultural relativism neither right nor wrong but rather a proper subject for intellectual examination.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **What Is Culture and How Is It Studied?** Culture, one of the broadest and most fundamental concepts of social life, is the lens through which we view the world. Culture is learned slowly and incrementally, it is internalized, and it is ubiquitous. It is difficult to study, in part because it is all-encompassing and in part because it is hard for sociologists to view cultures (including their own) impartially.
- Unlike anthropologists, who often intentionally seek out foreign cultures, most sociologists focus on their own cultures. However, many sociologists still engage in the process of "othering," selecting areas of culture that seem exotic or bizarre. When studying any group it is important to employ cultural relativism—that is, to see and study any culture in its own right rather than making judgments based on your own culture's norms.
- **Components of Culture** Students of culture may divide the topic into two categories: material culture, which consists of any physical object to which we give meaning (from buildings and architecture to key chains and toys), and nonmaterial or symbolic culture composed of ideas and beliefs. Symbolic culture can then be broken

down further into types of communication as well as values and norms.

- Communication is one of the most important functions of symbolic culture. Signs and gestures are the simplest forms of communication. Language, the basis for symbolic culture, is more complicated. Some theorists, like Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, have argued that language goes beyond mere communication and shapes our perceptions. Although some of their findings have been discredited, this idea remains influential.
- Values, shared beliefs about what the group considers worthwhile or desirable, guide the creation of norms, which are formal and informal rules about acceptable behaviors. Types of norms can be distinguished by the strictness with which they are enforced. Folkways, ordinary conventions of everyday life, are loosely enforced norms. Mores are closely related to the culture's core values, so they carry much greater weight and are more likely to be formalized. Taboos, the most strongly enforced norms of all, are felt so deeply that even thinking about a violation is disturbing.
- Positive and negative sanctions help maintain norms and enforce social control. This control may also be enforced by authority figures such as parents and police, but socialization is equally important, since internalized norms become self-enforcing. Additionally, it is important to distinguish between ideal culture, the norms that members of a group believe should be observed, and real culture, which describes actual patterns of behavior.
- **Variations in Culture** Although much research focuses on the differences between cultures, the variation within a culture is just as important. Large cultural groups may contain subcultures whose ideals and goals are distinct from, though generally harmonious with, those of the dominant culture, and countercultures, groups whose ideals and goals are largely incompatible with mainstream norms. Even mainstream culture is often characterized by points of dissension and division, which are sometimes called culture wars.
- **High, Low, and Popular Culture** High culture is distinguished from low culture based on characteristics of their audiences, not characteristics of their cultural objects. In fact, arguments about whether a particular cultural product constitutes high or low culture usually indicate a struggle over values and beliefs, not just aesthetics or taste. Individual cultural consumption is shaped not only by personal preference but also by interpretive communities and a variety of institutions responsible for creating, advertising, and disseminating products.
- **Cultural Change** Though culture usually changes slowly, change can also happen rapidly, as it does in much of the world today. Technological determinism explains recent cultural change by arguing that new technologies, like the microchip, are the determining factors in social life. Because this sort of technology connects people around the world, it also facilitates change through cultural diffusion, cultural leveling, and cultural imperialism.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. In this chapter, you read about how Horace Miner described the body rituals of the Nacirema. Choose another aspect of daily life and describe its associated artifacts, practices, and beliefs in similar detail. How might a complete stranger view the bar scene, for instance, or spectators at a sporting event? What does this tell you about ethnocentrism?
2. List five pieces of material culture you have with you right now, and explain what they indicate about the tastes, habits, and lifestyle supported by your cultural group.
3. Describe a norm that used to be a more but has transitioned to folkway status. How did you decide it was a now a folkway?
4. When was the last time you violated a folkway? How were you sanctioned? What sorts of sanctions do we impose on those who go against our accepted mores?
5. Same-sex marriage has been a focal point of recent culture wars, with some states (and nations) taking steps toward legalization of such unions, some directly banning them, and others taking a middle course. What values are in conflict here? Do both sides adhere to values that may be defined as "American"? What tactics are the different sides using in this culture war?
6. In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, a series of protests against the World Trade Organization were launched worldwide. The protesters represented a multitude of organizations and causes coming together to support a loosely defined common goal. In your opinion, would these protesters be more accurately characterized as subcultures or countercultures? Why?

7. Travelers in the United States used to encounter very different customs, traditions, and foods from one region to the next. These days, one may find a McDonald's or Starbucks in almost every American town—and in many countries across the globe. Is this good or bad? Why? Does it truly lessen cultural differences?

8. Make a list of ways in which the media—including advertisements—reach you each day. How many of these media messages represent mainstream Western ideals? What kinds of media messages don't conform to these norms?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Adorno, Theodor. 1991. *The Culture Industry*. London: Routledge. A sharp critique of the business of culture, arguing that our consciousness is controlled by corporations that manipulate our desires to maximize profits.

Coupland, Douglas. 1995. *Microserfs*. New York: HarperCollins. A darkly humorous novel about the consequences of living in a world dominated by technological change and electronic media. Although fictional, the story of overworked computer programmers' struggle to "get a life" addresses serious questions about the effects of technology.

Fadiman, Anne. 1998. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. A true story of clashing values, norms, and beliefs experienced by a Hmong immigrant family in the United States, it depicts the power of cross-cultural communication.

Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen. The classic study of musical subcultures in Great Britain, from teddy boys to mods and rockers to skinheads, punks, and beyond. If you've ever wondered how a subculture maintains its own distinctive identity, Hebdige has an answer.

High Times. A monthly periodical "dedicated to presenting the true independent voice of today's culture through provocative coverage of politics, arts and entertainment, news, fiction, and fashion not found in the mainstream media," with a focus on the cultivation and uses of *cannabis sativa*. Also online at www.hightimes.com.

Kincaid, James R. 1998. *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting*. London: Duke University Press. Examines the social functions of the fascination with one of our culture's strongest taboos. It's obvious why pedophilia is taboo but less obvious why so much attention is paid to it given how rare it is. This book helps to explain how taboos contribute to social control.

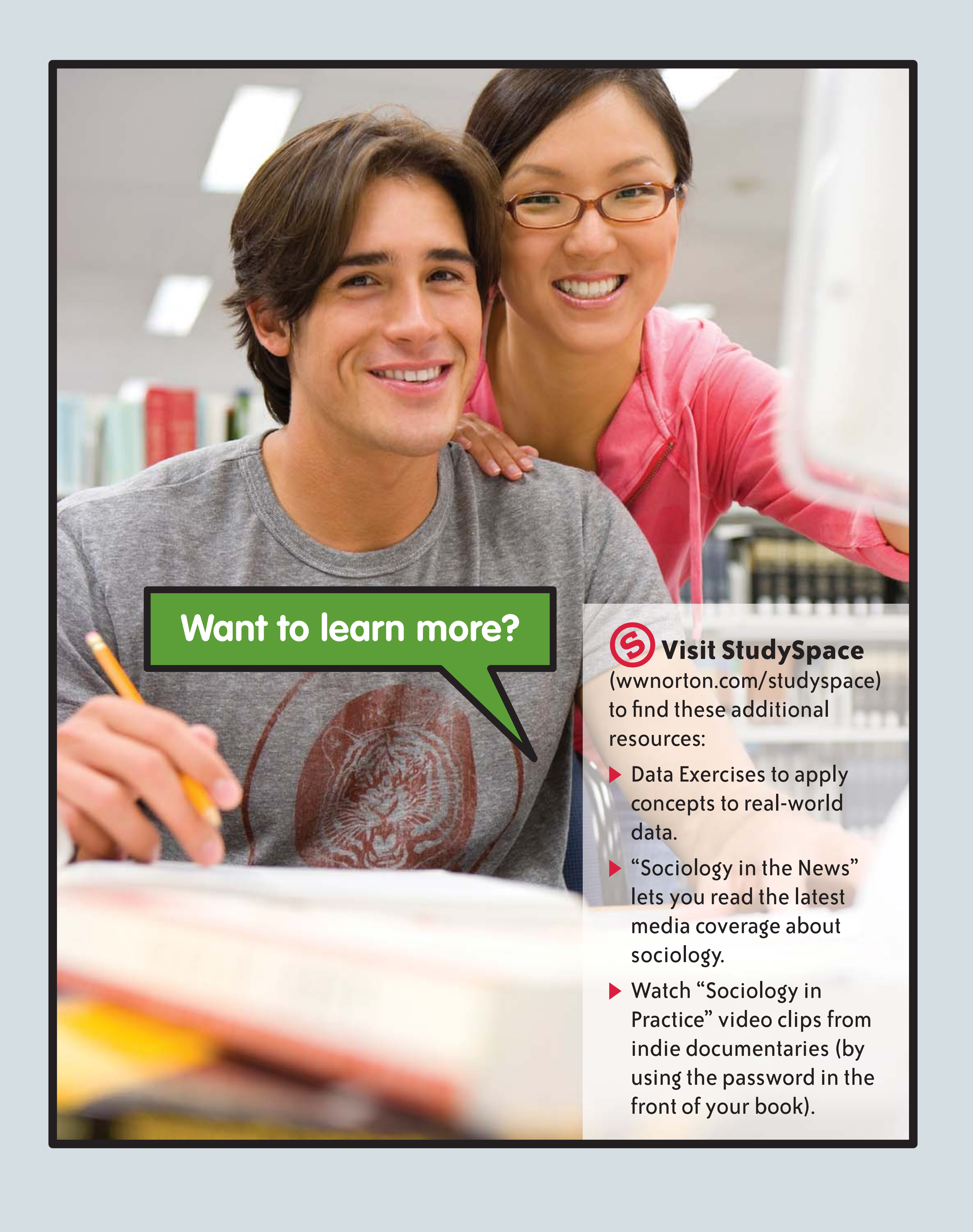
Lewin, Ellen, and William L. Leap, eds. 1996. *Out in the Field: Reflections of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. A collection of narratives describing the fieldwork of lesbian and gay anthropologists. Many of the entries describe how members of a culture often treated as "other" sometimes can more easily notice cultural differences and similarities.

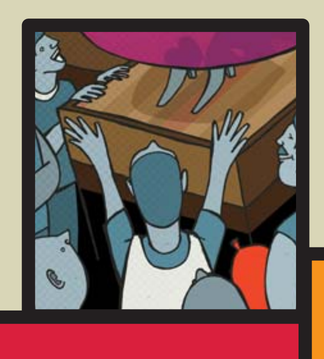
Liberman, Mark, and Geoffrey K. Pullum. 2006. *Far from the Madding Gerund and Other Dispatches from Language Log*. Wilsonville, OR: William, James & Co. Provides an interesting assessment of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and summarizes, often humorously, the research on the "great Eskimo vocabulary hoax."

My Big Fat Greek Wedding. 2002. Dir. Joel Zwick. Warner Bros. A romantic comedy highlighting the differences between mainstream and subcultural groups through the story of two people who meet and fall in love, one from an immigrant Greek family and the other from a typical WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) family.

Schlosser, Eric. 2004. *Reefer Madness: Sex, Drugs, and Cheap Labor in the American Black Market*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. Discusses the contradictions between America's real and ideal culture, which harshly punishes marijuana dealers and pornographers while allowing migrant workers to toil in horrible conditions.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2002. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. London: Verso. A provocative discussion of the limits of multiculturalism.


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CHAPTER 5

The Self and Interaction

Who are you? Well, it really depends on the situation. In the classroom, you are a student; at home, you are a child, a sibling, a parent, a spouse, or a partner. In your office, you are the boss or the employee; in your studio, you are an artist or a woodworker. These are all facets of who you are, grounded in the real activities of your everyday life—school, work, hobbies, relationships. Online, though, reality need not limit you to such mundane identities. Online, you can be anyone you want!

Below is a sampling of actual online usernames from a variety of internet domains. Since people generally choose their own usernames, we can assume that they are meant to express something about the user's personality—sort of like a personalized license plate. Some names might cause us to modify our opening question a bit: Who do these people *think* they are? Or, perhaps, *wish* they *were*?

angelbabee3
bluechihuahua
crazyaboutjesus
heartbreakah
intensejello
ladyinpain
luvsexxy
mauiwowee
mostwanted
motherwitch
nerd87
rebelcutie
superman22
viciousvixen
yummmiest

Choosing a username is one of many ways we express ourselves in social interaction. Because our online identities are usually disembodied and removed from the context of our everyday lives, we can say anything we want about who we are (or think we are, or wish to be). Whether or not these folks are actually heartbreakers, rebel cuties, or supermen in real life, they can be those things online. What's your username?

SocIndex

Then and Now

600 B.C.: A Hindu surgeon performs the first rhinoplasty (nose job), reconstructing a patient's nose from a portion of tissue from the cheek

2007: 284,960 nose jobs are performed in the United States alone

Here and There

United States: Almost 50% of American women are on weight-loss diets on any given day

Nigeria: Waikiriki women are confined to a "fattening" hut for five weeks before their wedding

This and That

The top five cosmetic surgery procedures for women are breast augmentation, liposuction, nose reshaping, eyelid surgery, and tummy tuck

The top five cosmetic surgery procedures for men are nose reshaping, eyelid surgery, liposuction, male breast reduction, and hair transplantation

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter, you will learn how the self is connected to all social phenomena (such as gender and race, and the effects of mass media) and how interaction constructs them all. You will be acquiring some new analytic tools (including the concepts of socialization and impression management), which will be referenced again in the chapters to come. In addition, you will be introduced to a new way of looking at the self—indeed, a new way of looking at *your* self—that emphasizes the role of the social in creating the individual. And you will be reminded of the reverse: as your society makes you who you are, you have a role (in fact, many roles!) to play in shaping your society.

What Is Human Nature?

"That's just human nature" is a phrase we often use to explain everything from violence and jealousy to love and altruism. But what is human nature, really? What is the thing about us that is unique and irreducible, that we all have in common and that separates us from other creatures? From a sociologist's perspective, it is culture and society that make us human. These things that we have created also make us who we are. We have to *learn* the meanings we give to food, housing, sex, and everything else, and society is the teacher.

You would be a very different person had you been born in fourteenth-century Japan, in an Aztec peasant family, or in the Norwegian royal court. You would have learned a different language, a different set of everyday skills, and a different set of meanings about how the world works. Also, your sense of who you are would be radically different in each case because of the particular social structures and interactions you would encounter. If you were a member of an Aztec peasant family, for example, you would expect to be married to someone of your parents' choosing in your early teens (McCaa 1994). Girls would be considered old maids if they were still single at fifteen and might end up as prostitutes or concubines if they did not find a husband by this tender age.

nature vs. nurture debate the ongoing discussion of the respective roles of genetics and socialization in determining individual behaviors and traits

socialization the process of learning and internalizing the values, beliefs, and norms of our social group, by which we become functioning members of society

The Nature vs. Nurture Debate

If it is culture and society that make us human, what role does our genetic makeup play? Aren't we *born* with certain instincts? These are questions posed in what is often called the **nature vs. nurture debate**. Those taking the nature side, often sociobiologists, some psychologists, and others in the natural sciences, argue that behavioral traits can be explained by genetics. Those taking the nurture side, sociologists and others in the social sciences, argue that human behavior is learned and shaped through social interaction. Which of these arguments is right?

Both are right. You don't have to look far to see that genetics, or nature, plays a role in who we are. For example, research shows that high levels of testosterone contribute to stereotypically masculine traits such as aggressiveness and competitiveness (Van Goozen et al. 1994). However, it is also true that facing a competitive challenge (such as a baseball game) causes testosterone levels to rise (Booth et al. 1989). So is it the hormone that makes us competitive, or is it competition that stimulates hormone production? An additional example involves a study of moral and social development in people with brain injuries. Stephen W. Anderson and colleagues (1999) studied patients whose prefrontal cortex had been damaged. Those who had received the injury as infants struggled with moral and social reasoning, finding it difficult or impossible to puzzle out questions like "Is it acceptable for a man to steal the drug needed to save his wife's life if he can't afford to pay for it?" People who received the same injury as adults, however, were able to deal with such issues. Anderson and his research team hypothesized that there is a crucial period in brain development when people acquire the capacity for moral reasoning. In other words, nature provides a biological window through which social and moral development occurs.

The point is that there is a complex relationship between nature and nurture. Either one alone is insufficient to explain what makes us human. Certainly heredity gives us a basic potential, but it is primarily our social environment that determines whether we will realize or fall short of that potential or develop new ones. We are subject to social influences from the moment we are born (and even before), and these influences only increase over the years. In part because the influence of social contact happens so gradually and to some extent unconsciously, we don't really notice what or how we are learning.

The Process of Socialization

We often speak of "socializing" with our friends, yet the idea of "socializing" is only part of what sociologists mean by **socialization**. Socialization is a twofold process. It includes

the process by which a society, culture, or group teaches individuals to become functioning members, and the process by which individuals learn and internalize the values and norms of the group. Socialization thus works on both an individual and a social level: we learn our society's way of life and make it our own. Socialization accomplishes two main goals. First, it teaches members the skills necessary to satisfy basic human needs and to defend themselves against danger, thus ensuring that society itself will continue to exist. Second, socialization teaches individuals the norms, values, and beliefs associated with their culture and provides ways to ensure that members adhere to their shared way of life.

Social Isolation

We can appreciate how important socialization is when we see what happens to people who are deprived of social contact. When infants are born, they exhibit almost none of the learned behaviors that characterize human beings. Even their instincts for food or shelter or self-preservation are barely recognizable and almost impossible for them to act on alone. Babies do have innate capacities but can only fully develop as human beings through contact with others. There are several startling cases that demonstrate this (Newton 2004).



Mowgli, the "Man Cub" Fictional accounts of feral children, like Mowgli, the hero of the animated Disney film *The Jungle Book*, are quite different from real socially isolated children who struggle to learn language and interact with others.

Perhaps you have heard myths about feral children, or children who have grown up in the wild. Supposedly there are real cases of children being raised by wolves, as well as works of fiction such as *Tarzan of the Apes* and *The Jungle Book*. Such stories present images of primitive humans who have survived outside society and who are both heathen and uncivilized yet pure and uncorrupt, who lack in social graces but possess the keenest of instincts. Legend has it that as far back as the thirteenth century, experiments were conducted by German emperor Frederick II to see whether humans could return to their natural and perfect state as depicted in the biblical Garden of Eden. Without human contact, the children who were used in these cruel experiments did not reveal any divine truths to the experimenters—they simply perished (Van Cleve 1972).

Although scientific ethics would never allow such experiments today, there are unfortunately real-life cases involving children who have lived in extreme social isolation. Sociologist Kingsley Davis (1940) studied several of these cases to better understand the relationship between human development and socialization.

One case from the 1930s involves a child named Isabelle, who was sequestered with her unmarried mother in a dark room of the family's Ohio home (K. Davis 1940, 1947). The mother, a deaf-mute, communicated with her using only gestures. Isabelle consequently did not learn to speak at all and communicated by making low, croaking sounds. When she was finally discovered by authorities, it was found that, in almost all ways, she had failed to develop like a normal child. Her behavior could only be described as primitive and bizarre, although there was never evidence of any congenital physical or mental disability. Isabelle did have a remarkable capacity for learning once she was exposed to regular human contact. But language skills were only part of what she later had to acquire in order to take her place as a member of society. Although she eventually overcame many of the effects of her social isolation, it was only through intensive training with medical and psychological specialists. It took two years after her rescue for her to acquire language and learn to interact with others, demonstrating that without socialization, we are almost totally devoid of the qualities we normally associate with being human. Isabelle was able, with intensive remedial socialization, to "catch up" to her peers and become a normal child, something she was denied by her upbringing.

The socialization process begins in infancy and is especially productive once a child begins to understand and use language (Ochs 1986). But socialization is not complete at that point. It is a lifelong process that continues to shape us through experiences such as school, work, marriage, and parenthood, as we will see in the next few sections.

Theories of the Self

Having a sense of one's self is perhaps the most fundamental of all human experiences. When seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes exclaimed, "I think, therefore I am," he was expressing this basic fact—that we possess a consciousness about ourselves. More recently, some have wondered whether higher mammals or primates might also have this same self-consciousness; while that has yet to be determined, we do know that consciousness is at the core of humanness.

The **self** is our experience of a distinct, real, personal identity that is separate and different from all other people. We can be "proud of ourselves," "lose control of ourselves," or want to "change ourselves," suggesting that we have the ability to think about ourselves as if we were more than one being and to see ourselves from the vantage point of an observer. Our thoughts and feelings emanate both *from* and *toward* ourselves; this is, in effect, how we come to "know" ourselves.

But just where does this sense of a self come from? How do we arrive at self-knowledge? When sociologists address these questions, they look at both the individual and society to find the answer. They believe that the self is created and modified through social interaction over the course of a lifetime. But while sociologists agree that the self is largely a social product, there are still a number of different theories about how the self develops, as we will see.

Psychoanalytic Theory: Sigmund Freud

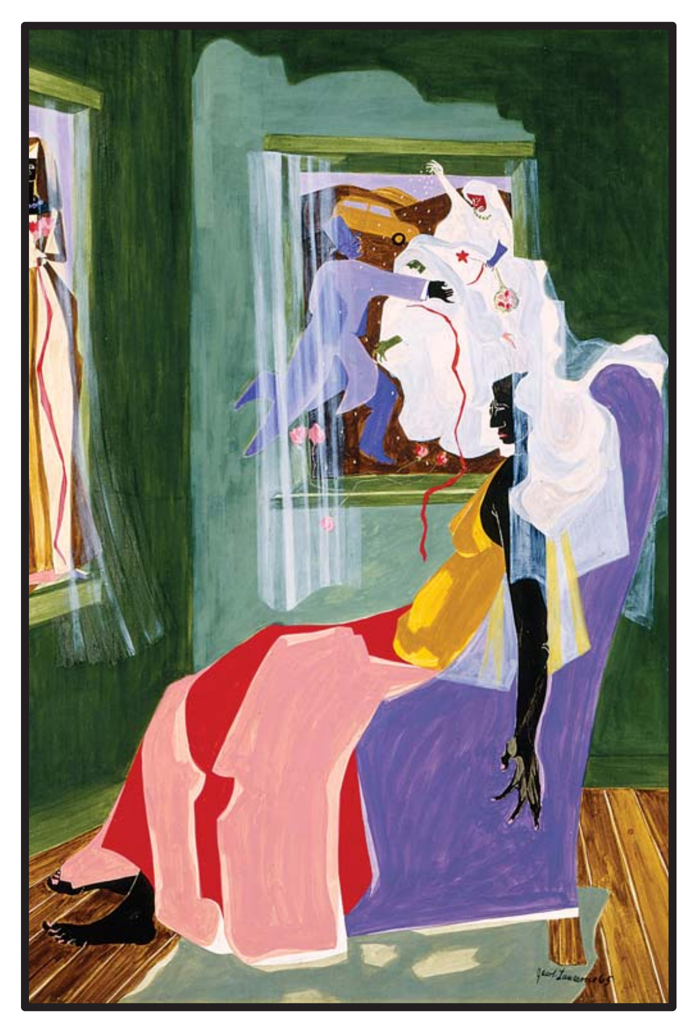
The psychoanalytic perspective on the self, which is usually associated with Sigmund Freud, emphasizes childhood and sexual development as indelible influences on an individual's identity. While Freud's ideas have generated a great deal of controversy among academics, they remain compelling for sociologists, as noted in Chapter 2.

Perhaps his greatest contribution to understanding the self is his idea of the unconscious mind, as featured in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/1955). Freud believed that the conscious level of awareness was but the tip of the iceberg and that just below the surface was a far greater area of the mind, the subconscious and the unconscious. He proposed that this unconscious energy was the source of our conscious thoughts and behavior. For example, the unconscious urge to slay our rivals may manifest itself in a conscious decision to work harder at the office in order to outshine a competitive coworker.

According to Freud, the mind consists of three interrelated systems: the id, the ego, and the superego. The **id**, which is composed of biological drives, is the source of instinctive, psychic energy. Its main goal is to achieve pleasure and to avoid pain in all situations, which makes the id a selfish and unrealistic part of the mind. For example, despite all your hard work, sometimes that competitive coworker is the one who gets the raise—not exactly what the pleasure-seeking id desired. The **ego**, by contrast, is the part that deals with the

self the individual's conscious, reflexive experience of a personal identity separate and distinct from other individuals

id, ego, and **superego** according to Freud, the three interrelated parts that make up the mind. The id consists of basic inborn drives that are the source of instinctive psychic energy. The ego is the realistic aspect of the mind that balances the forces of the id and the superego. The superego has two components (the conscience and the ego-ideal) and represents the internalized demands of society.



Dreams and the Subconscious In his book *Interpretation of Dreams*, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud outlined three psychological systems—the id, the ego, and the superego—which regulate subconscious drives and help keep an individual mentally balanced.

real world. It operates on the basis of reason and helps to mediate and integrate the demands of both the id and the superego. So the ego is the part of the self that says, "Okay, this time the other guy won, but if I keep trying, I'm bound to get that raise eventually."

The **superego** is composed of two components: the conscience and the ego-ideal. The conscience serves to keep us from engaging in socially undesirable behavior, and the ego-ideal upholds our vision of who we believe we should ideally be. The superego develops as a result of parental guidance, particularly in the form of the rewards and punishments we receive as children. It inhibits the urges of the id and encourages the ego to find morally acceptable forms of behavior. So the superego helps suppress the urge to kill your competitor and keeps you working toward getting that raise in socially acceptable ways. Each of these systems serves a different mental or emotional function, yet they all work together to keep the individual in a more or less healthy state of balance.

Freud also proposed that between infancy and adulthood, the personality passes through four distinct **psychosexual stages of development** (1905). This theory emerged from his therapy work with adult patients who were asked to try to recall earlier periods from their lives. According to the theory, a child passes through the first three stages of development between the ages of one and five. Most people have little or no memory whatsoever of this period, yet according to psychoanalytic theory it is supposed to set the stage for the rest of one's adult life. The last stage of development begins around the age of twelve, but few people successfully complete this final transition to maturity. In some cases, the transitions through the first three stages are not completely successful either, so that people may find themselves stuck, or "fixated," at an earlier stage. Perhaps you've known someone who is considered to have an "oral fixation"—this person, thought to be partially stuck in the first stage of development, might smoke, overeat, or be verbally aggressive. Someone who is "anal retentive"—a neatnik, tightwad, or control freak—is thought to be partially stuck in the second stage. These kinds of personality traits, rooted in early childhood (according to Freud), appear as "hang-ups" in the adult.

Other sociologists have extended Freud's work in this area, focusing especially on gender identity—our selves as feminine or masculine. Nancy Chodorow, a feminist and psychoanalytic sociologist, has written widely on human behavior and internal psychic structures and how patterns of gendered parenting and early childhood development can lead to the reproduction of traditional sex roles in society (1978, 1994).

The Looking-Glass Self: Charles Cooley

Around the same time Freud was developing his theories (early 1900s), other social theorists interested in the self were working on the other side of the Atlantic. Charles Cooley, an early member of the Chicago School of sociology, devised a simple but elegant way to conceptualize how individuals gain a sense of self. His idea is captured in the following short poem, which summarizes a profound and complex process.

> *Each to each a looking-glass,*
> *Reflects the other that doth pass.*

Cooley referred to this concept as the **looking-glass self** (1909). He believed that we all act like mirrors to each other, reflecting back to one another an image of ourselves. We do this in three steps.

1. *We imagine how we look to others*—not just in a physical sense, but in how we present ourselves. For example, we may imagine that others find us friendly, funny, or hardworking. The idea we have of ourselves is particularly important in regard to significant others. Whether they are parents, bosses, friends, or partners, we care about how we look to these people.
2. *We imagine other people's judgment of us*. We try to picture others' reactions and to interpret what they must be feeling. What is their opinion of me? Do they think I am smart enough? Lazy? Boring? Too tall? Not talkative enough?
3. *We experience some kind of feeling about ourselves based on our perception of other people's judgments*. If we imagine, for instance, that they think of us as competent, we may feel pride; conversely, if we think they consider us inadequate, then we may feel shame or embarrassment. The important point here is that we respond to the judgments that we *believe* others make about us, without really knowing for sure what they think. And we're not always right. We may draw wildly unrealistic conclusions. But according to Cooley, it is these perceptions, not reality, that determine the feelings we ultimately have about ourselves.

The social looking-glass, the way we see ourselves reflected back from others together with the feelings we develop as a result of what we imagine they see in us, forms

psychosexual stages of development four distinct stages of the development of the self between birth and adulthood, according to Freud. Each stage is associated with a different erogenous zone.

looking-glass self the notion that the self develops through our perception of others' evaluations and appraisals of us

our concept of self. For Cooley, there could be no sense of self without society, for there is no individual self without a corresponding "other" to provide us with our looking-glass self-image.

The suggestion that we are dependent on what others think of us—or rather what we think they think—for our own self-concept might seem appalling: are we really that hung up on what other people think? But while some of us may be influenced to a greater or lesser degree, *all* of us come to know ourselves through relationships, either real or imagined, with others.

Mind, Self, and Society: George Herbert Mead

Another member of the Chicago School, George Herbert Mead, expanded upon Cooley's ideas about the development of the self and laid the essential groundwork that became the theory of symbolic interactionism. Mead also believed that self was created through social interaction. He believed that this process started in childhood—that children began to develop a sense of self at about the same time that they began to learn language. The acquisition of language skills coincides with the growth of mental capacities, including the ability to think of ourselves as separate and distinct and to see ourselves in relationship to others (1934).

According to Mead, the development of the self unfolds in several stages as we move through childhood. First is the **preparatory stage**. Children under the age of three lack a completely developed sense of self, and so they have difficulty distinguishing themselves from others. Such children begin the development process by simply imitating or mimicking others around them (making faces, playing patty-cake) without fully understanding the meaning of their behavior. After age three, children enter the **play stage** of development when they start to pretend or play at being "mommy," "firefighter," "princess," or "doctor." This is referred to as taking the role of the **particular or significant other**. As children learn the behavior associated with being a mother or doctor, they internalize the expectations of those particular others and begin to gain new perspectives in addition to their own. Such play also serves the purpose of anticipatory socialization for the real-life roles a child might play in the future.

In the final or **game stage** of development, children's self-awareness increases through a process Mead described using the example of games. By the early school years, children begin to take part in organized games. Each child must follow the rules of the game, which means that he or she must simultaneously take into account the roles of all the other players. Mead calls this overview the perspective of the **generalized other**. Thus children begin to understand the set of standards common to a social group—their playmates—and to see themselves from others' viewpoint. By taking the perspective of the generalized other, children are able to see themselves as objects. They gradually learn to internalize the expectations of the generalized other for themselves and to evaluate their own behavior. This is the beginning of understanding the attitudes and expectations of society as a whole.

Mead also recognized the dialectical or **dual nature of the self**: that is, the self as both subject and object. What we refer to as "I" is the subject component—the experience of a spontaneous, active, and creative part of ourselves, somewhat less socialized. What we refer to as "me" is the object component—the experience of a norm-abiding, conforming part of ourselves, more socialized and therefore reliant on others. The two components are inseparable and are

preparatory stage the first stage in Mead's theory of the development of self wherein children mimic or imitate others

play stage the second stage in Mead's theory of the development of self wherein children pretend to play the role of the particular or significant other

particular or significant other the perspectives and expectations of a particular role that a child learns and internalizes

game stage the third stage in Mead's theory of the development of self wherein children play organized games and take on the perspective of the generalized other

generalized other the perspectives and expectations of a network of others (or of society in general) that a child learns and then takes into account when shaping his or her own behavior

dual nature of the self the belief that we experience the self as both subject and object, the "I" and the "me"



The Particular Other According to Mead, once children learn about the self, they begin imitating others and playing roles. They begin to learn about perspectives other than their own.

united to form a single self in each of us. It is this process of recognizing the dual nature of the self, taking the role of the particular other, and seeing the perspective of the generalized other that Mead suggests leads to the development of the self.

Dramaturgy: Erving Goffman

Erving Goffman is another among the group of symbolic interactionists who see micro-level, face-to-face interaction as the building block of every other aspect of society. Goffman believes that all meaning, as well as our individual selves, is constructed through interaction. Many of his key ideas are expressed in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956).

To understand Goffman's work, we first need to briefly consider another of the early Chicago School sociologists, W. I. Thomas. What is now called the **Thomas theorem** (Thomas and Thomas 1928) states that "if people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 572). In other words, because we encounter ambiguous situations every day, many meanings are possible. The way we define each situation, then, becomes its reality.

For example, suppose you're walking down the street and you witness a woman slapping a man in public. What are the possible meanings of that situation? It could be a fight or spousal abuse; it could be a joke or a friendly greeting, depending on how hard the slap is. It could be that he has just passed out and she is hoping to revive him. The participants could be actors shooting a scene from a film. Each of these definitions leads to a different set of potential consequences—you might intervene, call the police, stand by and laugh, ignore them, summon paramedics, or ask for an autograph, depending on which meaning you act upon. Each **definition of the situation** lends itself to a different approach, and the consequences are real.

Goffman looks at how we define situations interactionally—not just cognitively within our own heads, but in interaction with others. Think about it: how do you get your definition of the situation across to others? If you think a classroom lecture is boring, you may look over at your best friend and roll your eyes . . . she nods, indicating that she knows what you mean. The eye roll and the nod are **expressions of behavior**, tools we use to project our definitions of the situation to others.

What Goffman calls **expressions given** are typically verbal and intended—most of our speech falls into this category. Almost all of what we say, we *mean* to say, at least at that moment. Only in situations of extreme emotional response—such as fear, pain, or ecstasy—might we make unintended utterances. **Expressions given off**, like the eye roll and the nod, are typically nonverbal but observable in various ways and may be intended or unintended. Things like facial expressions, mannerisms, body language, or styles of dress are important indicators to others about the definition of the situation.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT Reading meaning in others' expressions of behavior requires a bit of caution. We know that people may deliberately say things to hide what they really feel, so we tend to think we get more real insight from expressions given off because we believe them to be unintended. But expressions given off can be manipulated as well. In a sense, Goffman is saying that it's not just what you say but how you say it that creates meaning. And he is a cynic, although he believes that everyday actors can be sincere. Goffman sees social life as a sort of con game, in which we work at controlling the impressions others have of us. He calls this process **impression management**. Like actors on a stage, we play our parts and use all of our communicative resources (verbal and nonverbal) to present a particular impression to others. We say and do what we think is necessary to communicate who we are and what we think, and we refrain from saying and doing things that might damage the impression we want others to have of us.

It is this focus on the performance strategies of impression management that has led scholars to refer to Goffman's central ideas as **dramaturgy**—and the theatrical allusion is entirely intended. As in the theater, we use certain tools to aid in our impression management. The **front**, for example, is the setting that helps establish a particular meaning (like a classroom for teaching or a bar for drinking). Our **personal front**—appearance,

Thomas theorem classic formulation of the way individuals define situations, whereby "if people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences"

definition of the situation an agreement with others about "what is going on" in a given circumstance. This consensus allows us to coordinate our actions with those of others and realize goals.

expressions of behavior small actions such as an eye roll or head nod, which serve as an interactional tool to help project our definition of the situation to others

expressions given expressions that are intentional and usually verbal, such as utterances

expressions given off observable expressions that can be either intended or unintended and are usually nonverbal

impression management the effort to control the impressions we make on others so that they form a desired view of us and the situation; the use of self-presentation and performance tactics

dramaturgy an approach pioneered by Erving Goffman in which social life is analyzed in terms of its similarities to theatrical performance

front in the dramaturgical perspective, the setting or scene of performances that helps establish the definition of the situation

personal front the expressive equipment we consciously or unconsciously use as we present ourselves to others, including appearance and manner; they help establish the definition of the situation

region in the dramaturgical perspective, the context or setting in which the performance takes place

backstage in the dramaturgical perspective, places in which we rehearse and prepare for our performances

frontstage in the dramaturgical perspective, the region in which we deliver our public performances

social construction the process by which a concept or practice is created and maintained by participants who collectively agree that it exists

manner, and style of dress (or "costume"), as well as gender, race, and age—helps establish the definition of the situation as well.

For example, Dr. Ferris is told quite often that she "doesn't look like a professor." This illustrates how we use elements of personal front to make judgments about people: our images of professors usually involve gruff, grizzled, older men in unfashionable clothes, and so someone who is younger, friendlier, and female and who wears hipper jewelry must work harder at convincing others that she is in fact a professor. Similarly, when a student happens to see Dr. Ferris at a restaurant, movie theater, or department store, the student's response is almost always the same: "What are you doing here?"

The social setting, or **region** (which includes the location, scenery, and props), makes a big difference in how we perceive and interact with the people we encounter there. Students and professors recognize one another and know how to interact when on campus or in the classroom. But in other venues, we are out of context, and this can confuse us. We seldom think of our professors as people who have off-campus lives—it's hard to see them as people who dine out, see movies, or buy underwear (for that matter, professors rarely think of their students this way either!). So when we encounter one another in unfamiliar regions, we often don't know how to behave because the old classroom scripts don't work.

In addition, there are places known as back regions, or **backstage**, where we prepare for our performances—which take place in front regions, or **frontstage**. We behave differently—and present different selves—frontstage than we do backstage; your professor behaved differently this morning while he showered, shaved, dressed, and made breakfast for his kids than he is behaving now, lecturing and answering questions in his sociology classroom. For Goffman, the key to understanding these nuances in impression management is to recognize that we present different selves in different situations, and the responses of others to those selves continually shape and mold our definitions of situation *and* self. Thus we can say that the self is a **social construction** (Berger and Luckmann 1966). The self is something that is created or invented in interaction with others who also participate in agreeing to the reality or meaning of that self as it is being presented in the situation.

We also make claims about who we are in our interactions. These claims can be either accepted or contradicted by others, which can make things either easier or harder for our self-image. Most of the time, others support the selves we project. For example, when your professor starts lecturing and you begin to take notes, you are supporting the version of self that he is presenting: he is "doing professor," and in response, you are "doing student." Another way that we support the selves that people present is to allow them to save



Front and Back Regions Just like Gene Simmons, pictured on stage with his band, Kiss, and at home, we present ourselves differently depending on the situation. Others' responses to our behavior in those different settings shape our definitions of ourselves.

TABLE 5.1 ***Theory in Everyday Life***

Perspective	Approach to the Self and Interaction	Case Study: Identity in Childhood
PSYCHOANALYSIS	Freud's theory of the unconscious mind as composed of an interrelated system (id, ego, superego) that underlies human behavior; personality develops through psycho-sexual stages.	Parents instill a conscience (superego) in children through rules that govern their instinctual behavior (id) until children mature and are self-governing (ego).
LOOKING-GLASS SELF	Cooley's theory of the self concept as derived from how we imagine others see us, and the feelings about ourselves based on the perceived judgments of others.	Parents and significant others serve as a reflection to children, who develop a sense of self based on their appraisals, real or imagined.
MIND, SELF, AND SOCIETY	Mead's theory of the self that develops through three stages (preparatory, play, and game); in role taking the particular or generalized other, we learn to see ourselves as others do.	Children gain a sense of self through imitation, play, and games, in which they learn various roles and take on the perspectives of others.
DRAMATURGY	Goffman's theory of the presentation of self; we are like actors on a stage whose performance strategies aid in impression management.	Children learn the arts of impression management and may present a different self to their parents than to other children or teachers.

face—to prevent them from realizing that they've done something embarrassing. Goffman calls this **cooling the mark out**, a phrase borrowed from con games, but it can be used as a tool of civility and tact as well. When the professor mixes up two related concepts in a lecture, for example, you let it pass because you know what she really meant to say. Or, even worse, you overlook the spinach between your professor's teeth until it can be called to his attention privately!

There are also situations in which the selves we project are contested or even destroyed. For example, if you raised your hand in a 200-person lecture hall and told the professor that he had spinach between his teeth, you would be undermining the self he is trying to present. His identity as an expert, an authority figure, a senior mentor, would be publicly damaged once you called attention to his dental gaffe (unless he was able to deflect the situation gracefully). In Goffman's view, then, the presentation of self and impression management are about power as well as about self. If you embarrass your professor in front of an auditorium full of students, he no longer possesses quite as much power as he did a few moments before.

Goffman's view of our interactions can be disturbing to some people, for it suggests that we are always acting, that we are never being honest about who we really are. But Goffman would challenge this interpretation of his work. Yes, some people deliberately deceive others in their presentation of self, but we must all present *some* type of self in social situations. Why wouldn't those selves be presented sincerely? As Goffman-inspired sociologist Josh Meyrowitz says, "While a dishonest judge may pretend to be an honest judge, even an honest judge must play the role of 'honest judge' " (1985, p. 30).

DATA WORKSHOP



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Impression Management in Action

This exercise in ethnography is designed to help make your own impression management visible—and to help you see how integral it is to your everyday life. You will observe yourself acting and interacting in two different social situations and will then do a comparative analysis of your presentation of self in each setting. Observing one's own behavior is a variant of the ethnographic method you read about in Chapter 3 known as **autoethnography**.

Step 1: Observation

Choose two different situations that you will encounter this week in everyday life, and commit to observing yourself for 30 minutes as you participate in each. For example, you may observe yourself at work, at a family birthday celebration, at lunch with friends, in your math class, riding on the bus or train, or watching a softball game. The two situations you choose don't need to be extraordinary in any way; in fact, the more mundane, the better. But they should be markedly different from one another.

Step 2: Analysis

After observing yourself in the two situations, consider the following questions.

cooling the mark out behaviors that help others to save face or avoid embarrassment, often referred to as civility or tact

autoethnography ethnographic description that focuses on the feelings and reactions of the ethnographer

- What type of "front" do you encounter when you enter each situation?
- How does the "region" or setting (location, scenery, and props) affect your presentation of self there?
- Can you identify "backstage" and "frontstage" regions for each situation? Which of your activities are preparation and which are performance?
- What type of "personal front" (appearance, manner, dress) do you bring to each situation?
- How are your facial expressions, body language, and so forth ("expressions given off") different in each situation?
- What kinds of things do you say ("expressions given") in each situation?
- How do you modify what you do and say in each situation? Are there things you say or do in one that would be inappropriate, strange, or even absurd in the other?
- Who are you in each situation? Do you present a slightly different version of yourself in each? Why?

As you observe the most minute aspects of your interactions, you will probably discover that you perform somewhat different versions of yourself in the two situations. "Doing student," for instance, might be very different from "doing boyfriend."

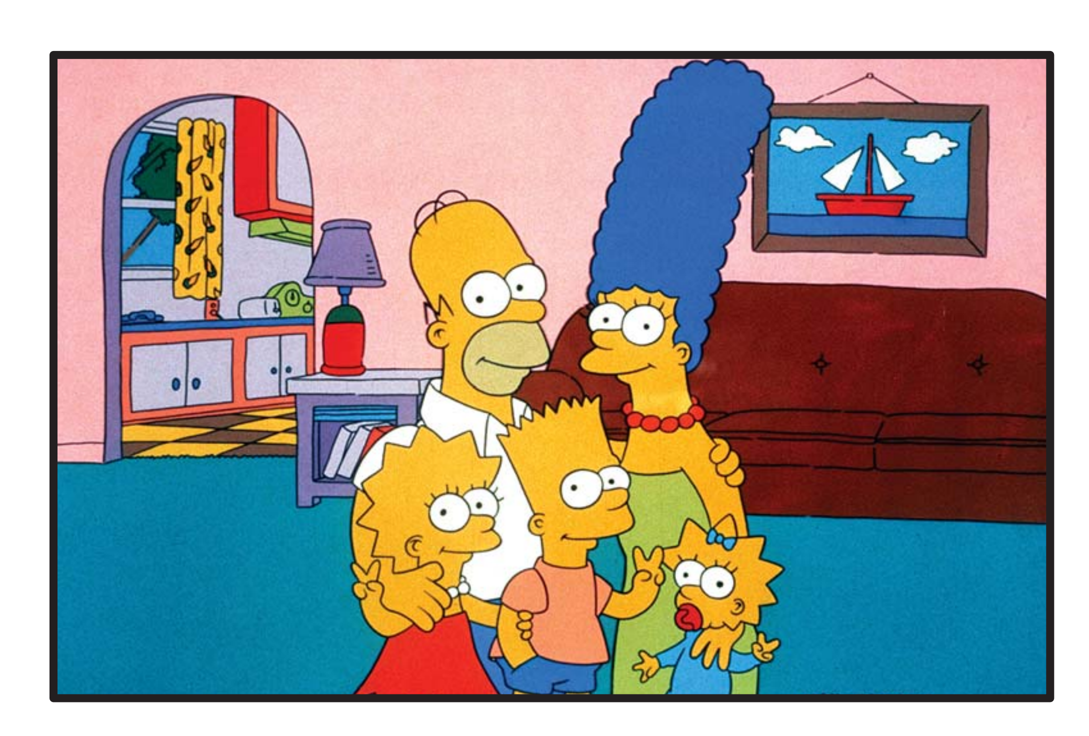
A final Goffman-inspired question to ask is this: does engaging in impression management mean that we have no basic, unchanging self? If we bring different selves to different situations, what does that say about the idea of a "true self"? This issue is an important one, and we hope you use your Data Workshop findings to pursue it in greater depth.

There are two options for completing the Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Take some informal notes about your observations in step 1, and jot down some of your responses to the questions asked in step 2. Compare your notes and experiences with other students in small-group discussions. Use this as a way to learn more about yourself and others in the group.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: For step 1, use ethnographic methods of data gathering. Create written fieldnotes that record your actions, interactions, and thoughts during each 30-minute observation period. Be as detailed as possible in writing your fieldnotes. Then write a three- to four-page essay analyzing your experiences by addressing the questions in step 2. Make sure to refer to your fieldnotes in the essay, and include them as an attachment to your paper.

Agents of Socialization

Since our sense of self is shaped by social interaction, we should now turn our attention to the socializing forces that have the most significant impact on our lives. These



Family Has the Longest-Lasting Influence The family is the original group to which each person belongs, and it is the most important socializing agent.

forces, called **agents of socialization**, provide structured situations in which socialization takes place. While there are a variety of such influences in American society, notably religion, as well as our political and economic systems, we will focus here on what may be the four most predominant agents of socialization: the family, schools, peers, and the mass media.

The Family

The family is the single most significant agent of socialization in all societies. It's easy to see why. The family is the original group to which we belong. It is where early emotional and social bonds are created, where language is learned, and where we first begin to internalize the norms and values of our society. Most of our primary socialization, which teaches us to become mature, responsible members of society, takes place within the family. It is not surprising, then, that the family has perhaps the most long-lasting influence on the individual.

Most research has focused on the role of mothers in child-rearing practices (Goode 1982), although attention has recently turned to the significance of fathers as well as siblings and other relatives. For example, Scott Coltrane's book *Family Man* (1997) looks at historical changes in the roles of men as active parents and how men feel about their involvement in their children's lives. The family has such a powerful impact on us in part because as children we have little or no outside contact (until we start school) and therefore no basis for comparison. The family is our world.

The family is also *in* the world. Where a family is located, both geographically and socially—its ethnic, class, religious, educational, and political background—will affect family members (Lareau 2003). For example, one of the most important lessons we learn in families is about gender roles: we see what moms and dads, sisters and brothers are expected to do (like mow the lawn or fold the laundry) and convert these observations into general rules about gender in society (Chodorow 1978).

Socialization differs from family to family because each family has its own particular set of values and beliefs. A single family can also change over time. As years pass, children may not be raised in the same way as their older siblings, for the simple reason that parents have no experience with babies when their first child is born but plenty of experience by the time the youngest comes along. Nor are all aspects of socialization deliberate; some in fact are quite unintentional (as when a father's violent temper or a mother's depression is passed down to the next generation).

Schools

Many people remember their school years with fondness, dread, or perhaps relief that they're over! No wonder school makes such a great subject for bad dreams and movie scripts. Public elementary and secondary schools were first established in the United States in the 1800s. While attendance was uneven at first, education advocates believed that schooling played a critical role in maintaining a democracy (though blacks and women still lacked the right to vote) and in shaping future generations of citizens. Over the years, schools have gradually taken on greater responsibilities than merely teaching a prescribed curriculum. Schools now provide physical education, meals, discipline, and child care, all formerly the provinces of other social institutions.

When children begin attending school (including preschool and day care), it may be their first significant experience away from home. School helps them to become less dependent on the family, providing a bridge to other social groups. In school, children learn that they will be judged on their behavior and on academic performance. They learn not only formal subjects but also a **hidden curriculum** (P. Jackson 1968), a set of behavioral traits such as punctuality, neatness, discipline, hard work, competition, and obedience (to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 11). The socialization children receive from teachers, staff members, and other students occurs simultaneously and overlaps with what they learn in the family.

Recently, there has been increasing scrutiny regarding the role of teachers, especially in public schools. Because teachers are such potent role models for students, parents are concerned about the moral standing of those who are in charge of teaching their children, as well as their training and competence. There is increasing pressure for schools to take on even more responsibilities, including dealing with issues that used to be taught at home or in church—such as sex, violence, drugs and alcohol, and general morality and citizenship.

agents of socialization social groups, institutions, and individuals (especially the family, schools, peers, and the mass media) that provide structured situations in which socialization takes place

hidden curriculum values or behaviors that students learn indirectly over the course of their schooling because of the structure of the educational system and the teaching methods used

Peers

Peer groups are groups of people who are about the same age and have similar social characteristics. Peers may be friends at school or from the neighborhood, members of a sports team, or cabin mates at summer camp. As children

get older, peers often become more important than parents as agents of socialization. As the influence of peers increases, the influence of parents decreases. While the family still has the most long-lasting influence on an individual, it is peers who have the most intense and immediate effect on each other.

By adolescence, young people spend more time with their peers than with their parents or anyone else (Larson and Richards 1991). Membership in a peer group provides young people with a way of exercising independence from, and possibly reacting against, adult control. Young people tend to form peer subcultures that are almost entirely centered on their own interests, such as computer gaming or disc golf or garage bands, with distinct values and norms related to those interests.

The need to "fit in" with a peer group may seem overwhelming to some young people. Some will do almost anything to belong, even betray their own values: Bradley and Wildman (2002) found that peer pressure was a predictor of adolescent participation in risky behaviors such as dangerous driving, unsafe sex, and drug and alcohol use. Peer groups, while providing important and enjoyable social bonds, can also be the source of painful self-doubt, ridicule, or rejection for many young people.

The Mass Media

The mass media's role as one of the most significant sources of socialization is a somewhat recent phenomenon. Television began appearing in American homes a little over 50 years ago, and usage of the internet has become widespread only in the last decade. Yet for many of us, it would be almost impossible to imagine life without the mass media—whether print, electronic, or digital. This huge explosion, the dawning of the Information Age, is something we already take for granted, but we don't always see the ways in which it is changing our lives.

Many sociologists question whether the media may have even usurped some of the functions of the family in teaching us basic norms and values and giving advice on common problems. As an example, take the people of Fiji, a South Pacific island that lacked widespread access to television until 1995. A group of Harvard Medical School researchers took this unique opportunity to study the effects of television on the native population—specifically, they were interested in the ways in which Western programs influenced eating habits and body image among adolescent girls in a culture that "traditionally supported robust appetites and body shapes" (A. Becker et al. 2002).

Through surveys and interviews with the young women (the mean age was around 17) in 1995, just months after television was introduced and again in 1998, the researchers ascertained that Western television was in fact affecting body image and corresponding behaviors among the girls. In those three years the percentage of subjects whose survey responses indicated an eating disorder jumped from 12.5 to 29.2, and the percentage who reported self-induced vomiting as a form of weight control rose from none to 11.3. Dieting and dissatisfaction with weight were prevalent—and 83 percent of the girls who were interviewed reported that they felt television "had specifically influenced their friends



How Are Television Shows a Socializing Agent? How is wealth depicted on a show such as *Gossip Girl?*

and/or themselves to feel differently about or change their body shape or weight" (A. Becker et al. 2002).

The women of Fiji only recently encountered mass media. How do we measure the cumulative effect of the ubiquitous exposure to the mass media that pervade American society, day in and day out? Whose messages are we listening to, and what are we being told about ourselves and each other? On average, Americans watch between two and seven hours of television per day and spend more hours listening to the radio, CDs or iPods, reading, watching movies, playing video games, surfing the web, or sending instant messages and e-mail. By the time young people graduate from high school, they will have spent far more time with the mass media than in the classroom. While some worry that this means kids are lost in a fantasy world, Hodge and Tripp (1986) have argued that watching TV actually helps kids learn to distinguish between reality and fantasy, an important developmental milestone. In addition to their ability to entertain, the media also have great potential to inform and educate. It is clear that we internalize many of the values, beliefs, and norms presented in the media and that their powerful influence in our lives only stands to increase as we proceed into the Information Age.

DATA WORKSHOP



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Television as an Agent of Socialization

Television is a powerful and surreptitious agent of socialization. It is everywhere, and we devour it—so it seems important to ask what kinds of messages we are getting about our society from our viewing. How does TV socialize us? This Data Workshop will use content analysis (see the discussion of using existing sources in Chapter 3) to help you answer this question.

Choose one of the most popular TV series currently on the air—at the time of this writing, your choices might include *Lost*, *House*, *CSI*, or *The Office*. Choose a regular drama or comedy series rather than a newsmagazine, talk show, game show, or reality show.

Now choose some aspect of social status and individual identity that you want to focus on: for example, gender (how women or men are portrayed), race/ethnicity (how a particular ethnic group, such as African Americans or Latinos, is portrayed), sexuality (heterosexuals, gay men, or lesbians), class (poor people, wealthy people, or the middle class). For instance, you might look at the depiction of women in *Gossip Girl* or men in *Two and a Half Men*, the role of Latinos in *Law & Order* or African Americans in *Grey's Anatomy*, or the portrayal of the middle class in *Weeds* or the wealthy in *90210*.

Watch an episode of your chosen program in its entirety (you might want to TiVo or videotape the program or look for an episode on DVD or online so that you can re-view it if you need to). Take notes as you watch; note the program's content with reference to your particular topic choice. To give you an example of how to do this workshop, we use depictions of the working (in brackets below) as our topic and the program *Ugly Betty*. You should substitute your own choice of topic and current program for each of the following questions:

1. In the program, how many [working class] characters are there? How does the number of [working class] characters compare with the number of other characters? Are the [working class] roles major characters or minor characters? How can you tell?
2. What types of roles do the [working class] characters have? What are their activities, attitudes, and interactions like on the show? What kinds of things do they do and say that tell you who they are and what they are like?
3. Are the portrayals of [the working class] positive or negative? Humorous or serious? One-dimensional or multidimensional? How can you tell?
4. What image(s) of [the working class] does this program portray? In other words, what messages do the words, pictures, plot lines, and characters convey to viewers about [the working class] in general?

In the case of *Ugly Betty*, there are some stark contrasts between Betty Suarez's working-class family and the wealthy Meade family, the powerful executives who own *Mode* magazine where Betty works. There are some other working-class characters on the show in addition to the Suarez family, like *Mode* seamstress Christine McKinney or sandwich shop owner Giovanni "Gio" Rossi. The show gives us a window into the worlds of the working class and the wealthy, where we can see their different work experiences, lives at home, choices of leisure activities, and even divergent aspirations. While one group is fighting for control over a fashion empire, another is focused on trying to make ends meet, get a green card, or have a baby.

Now come the really important questions:

5. How does the content of this program contribute to our socialization process? What do we learn about [the working class] in society from watching the program? After finishing your analysis, what do you think about TV's powers of socialization?



Sister Pauline Quinn and Training Dogs in Prison

Can adopting a puppy change the world? According to Sister Pauline Quinn, a Dominican nun, it can when the dogs are adopted by prison inmates and trained to help the disabled! Sister Pauline knew something firsthand about life in a total institution, and not just the convent. Born Kathy Quinn, she was once a chronic runaway because of a dysfunctional family life and was eventually institutionalized for lack of another place for her to go. For several years afterward she was homeless, staying in abandoned buildings and trying to avoid getting picked up by the police as a vagrant. Kathy Quinn could well have died on the streets of Los Angeles, but instead her life was turned around when she found Joni, a German Shepherd.

Quinn felt that the dog was the beginning of the process of resocialization that helped return her to being a functioning member of society. It was the first time she had a true friend, one whose unconditional love was restoring her badly damaged self-esteem. Her time in institutions had left her "depersonalized," stripped of any positive identity with which to tackle the demands of life on the "outside." The understanding and affection she received from Joni began to heal Quinn of the traumas she had sustained in her youth. The work that Quinn did in training Joni transformed not only the dog but the person as well, eventually leading her to a happier and more productive life devoted to helping others.

Quinn was particularly drawn to the plight of women prisoners and believed that they too could find similar benefits through contact with dogs. She knew that life in prison could be extremely depersonalizing, especially for women, and that rehabilitation, if it was offered at all, was too often unsuccessful, returning convicts to the streets without having rebuilt their lives. In 1981, with the assistance of Dr. Leo Bustad, a professor of veterinary science at the University of Washington, she approached the Washington State Correctional Center for Women and proposed that inmates volunteer to train puppies adopted from local shelters and rescue organizations to become service and therapy dogs. The result was the Prison Pet Partnership Program.

The women selected to participate in the program get more than just dogs to train; they get the opportunity for substantial resocialization, which helps them to develop new, positive identities and learn valuable social skills that can translate to the outside world. The labor-intensive process of training a dog is perfectly suited to the needs and abilities of inmates, who have a great surplus of time and a desperate need to find constructive ways to occupy it. The rigors of dog training, which place an emphasis on achieving discipline and obedience through repetition and positive reinforcement, is a lesson not lost on the trainers. During the months of training, the animals even sleep with the inmates, providing added psychological benefits. Prisons report significant improvements in morale and behavior once dog training programs are in place. Allowing prisoners access to the dogs' unconditional love and giving the prisoners a chance to contribute to society in a meaningful way increase the likelihood that the prisoners will reenter mainstream society successfully.

While the program was originally motivated by Sister Quinn's desire to change the lives of prisoners, she was thinking of more than just the inmates, arguing that "things like this are part of a chain reaction of good." It begins with

There are two options for completing the assigned work.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare written notes that you can refer to during in-class discussions. Discuss your reactions and conclusions with other students in small-group discussions. Listen for any differences or variations in each other's insights.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay answering the questions posed above. Make sure to refer to specific segments of the TV show that support your analysis.

Adult Socialization

Being an "adult" somehow signifies that we've learned well enough how to conduct ourselves as autonomous members of society. But adults are by no means completely socialized.



Sister Pauline Quinn, pictured on the left, has started dog training programs in prisions in 19 states. Participants include the inmates pictured on the right.

the rescue of an unwanted animal that would otherwise be put down, gives emotional support and job training to prisoners, and finally provides handicapped and disabled people service animals that improve their lives.

Service animals trained to work with disabled people cost as much as $10,000 to train, so making more of them available can transform the lives of the people they're placed with. The original program, in the Washington penal system, has now placed over 700 dogs as service, seizure, or therapy dogs as well as pets. Only about one out of every 15 dogs has what it takes to work as a service or therapy dog, but the others are released into the community as "paroled pets," whose intensive training now makes them much more adoptable than they were before.

Prisons in at least 19 states have established similar dog training programs. The vast majority of them are funded without any state money, using only donations, and sometimes becoming nearly self-supporting by running grooming and kennel businesses. Military prisons have begun comparable programs to train service dogs for disabled veterans. Regardless of the specific mission each program pursues, prison pet training programs provide proof that changing the world always transforms those who give as much as it does those who receive. In 2001, the story of Sister Pauline Quinn and the prison dog training program was made into the original Lifetime TV movie *Within These Walls.*

Life is continually presenting us with new situations and new roles with unfamiliar norms and values. We are constantly learning and adjusting to new conditions over the life course and thereby participating in secondary socialization.

For example, your college training will teach you a great deal about the behaviors that will be expected of you in your chosen profession, such as responsibility and punctuality. But after graduating and obtaining a job, you will likely find further, unanticipated expectations. At the very least, you will be socialized to the local culture of a specific workplace, where new rules and customs (like "Always be closing!" in a real estate office) are observed. As your career unfolds, such episodes of socialization will recur as you take on different responsibilities or switch jobs.

Other examples of altered life circumstances include marrying, being divorced or widowed, raising a family, moving to a new community, losing a job or retiring—all of which require modifying attitudes and behaviors. For example, being divorced or widowed after many years of marriage means jumping into a dating pool that may look quite different from



Total Institutions The military, prisons, and cults are examples of total institutions where individual's identities are stripped away and reformed.

the last time you were in it—"safe sex," "splitting the check," and other new norms may be hard for older daters to assimilate. Adult socialization often requires the replacement of previously learned norms and values with different ones, what is known as **resocialization**. Facing a serious illness or growing old also often involves intensive resocialization. In order to cope with a new view of what their aging body will permit them to do, people must discard previous behaviors in favor of others (not working out every day, for example).

Another dramatic example of resocialization is found in **total institutions** (Goffman 1961), places such as prisons, cults, and mental hospitals, and in some cases even boarding schools, nursing homes, monasteries, and the military.

In total institutions, residents are severed from their previous relations with society, and their former identity is systematically stripped away and re-formed. There may be different ends toward which total institutions are geared, such as creating good soldiers, punishing criminals, or managing mental illness, but the process of resocialization is similar: all previous identities are suppressed and an entirely new, disciplined self is created.

Relatively few adults experience resocialization to the degree of the total institution. All, however, continue to learn and synthesize norms and values throughout their life as they move into different roles and social settings that present them once again with the challenges and opportunities of continued socialization.

resocialization the process of replacing previously learned norms and values with new ones as a part of a transition in life

total institution an institution in which individuals are cut off from the rest of society so that their lives can be controlled and regulated for the purpose of systematically stripping away previous roles and identities in order to create new ones

status a position in a social hierarchy that carries a particular set of expectations

Statuses and Roles

While agents of socialization play an important role in developing our individual identities, so does the larger scaffolding of society. This happens as we take on (or have imposed upon us) different statuses and roles.

A **status** is a position in a social hierarchy that comes with a set of expectations. Sometimes these positions are formalized—"professor," "president," or even "parent." Parental obligations, for example, are written into laws that prohibit the neglect and abuse of children. Other statuses are more informal—you may be the "class clown," for instance, or the "conscience" of your group of friends. The contours of these informal statuses are less explicit but still widely recognizable. We all occupy a number of statuses,



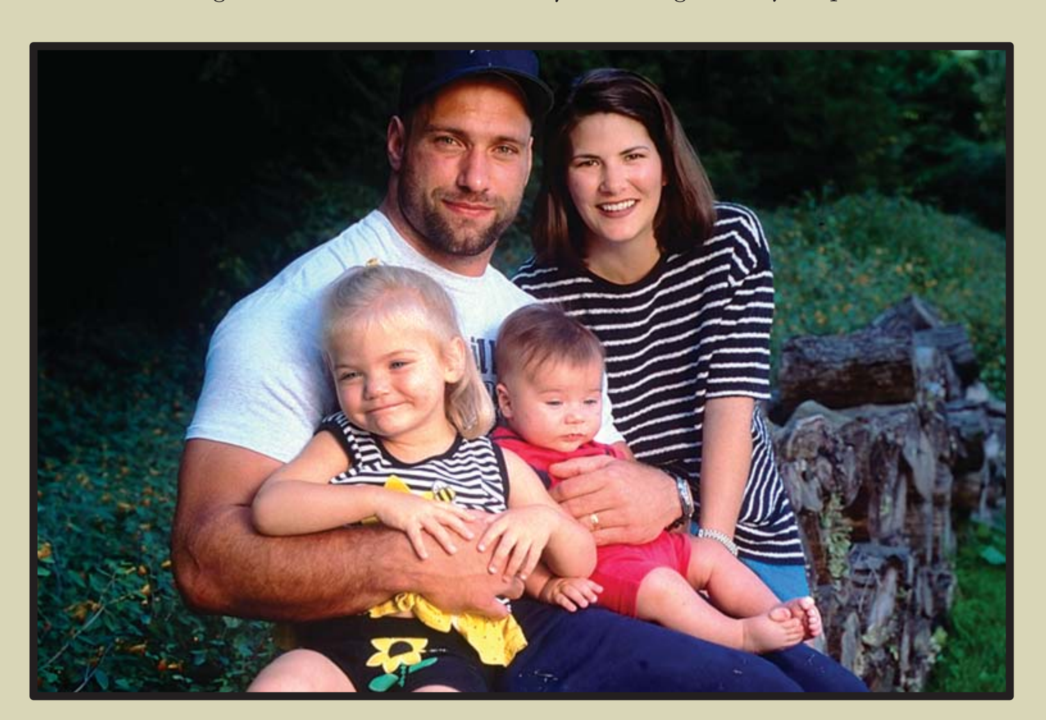
NFL vs. Family: Chris and Stefanie Spielman

In 1998, Chris Spielman, a linebacker for the Buffalo (New York) Bills, was getting ready to return to the field after recovering from a major injury. He and his wife, Stefanie, and their two small children were moving from their home state of Ohio to New York, and he'd get back into the game he loved. Stefanie had been Chris's cheerleader—literally and figuratively—for ten years, supporting him as he pursued his football career. "Captain Crunch" was the nickname of this four-time Pro-Bowler, and opponents on the field had no problem understanding why: Spielman was a big, tough guy, and football was his life. Then Stefanie was diagnosed with breast cancer, and their lives changed dramatically. Stefanie now needed to remain in Ohio for chemotherapy treatments, and Chris faced a crisis of decision making: go to New York to play football, or stay home with his wife and kids?

Chris Spielman was experiencing role conflict. His occupational role—professional athlete—required actions that were seemingly incompatible with his familial role, husband and father. The expectations attached to his occupational role included a willingness to move about the country to training camp and away-games and even to be traded to a team in another city. The expectations attached to his familial role included being able to provide hands-on care and nurturing for a sick wife and two small children. These expectations were not only incompatible, they may have created a certain amount of role strain related to his gender: it's still easier to see a big, strong man as a hard-hitting linebacker than as a nurturing husband and father. But Chris said, "I wanted to be the one to hold her hand when she vomited. I wanted to be there when they shaved her head. I wanted to take her to her chemo treatments" (Cabot 1999). None of this would be possible if he was in Dallas one week and Tampa the next. Role conflict was forcing him into a difficult choice: his job or his family?

Chris chose his family. As he said in a 1999 interview, "I wouldn't give my life for football, but I'd give my life for my family. There's no comparison. They're not even in the same stratosphere."

You may not become a professional athlete with a critically ill spouse, but it is absolutely certain that you will find yourself in situations where the demands of your occupational role clash with those of your familial role. Perhaps you already have. How will you resolve those role conflicts? Chris Spielman, now a commentator for ESPN, sums it up this way: "My kids can look back and say, 'When Dad had a tough decision to make, he did the right thing.' I wanted to set a good example for them" (Cabot 1999).



Chris Spielman, His Wife, Stefanie, and Their Two Children

as we hold positions in multiple social hierarchies at once. Some statuses change over the course of a lifetime (e.g., marital or parental status), while others usually do not (e.g., gender).

There are different kinds of statuses. An **ascribed status** is one we are born with that is unlikely to change (such as our gender or race). An **embodied status** is located in our physical selves (such as beauty or disability). Finally, an **achieved status** is one we have earned through our own efforts (such as an occupation, hobby, or skill) or that has been imposed on us in some way (such as a criminal identity, mental illness, or drug addiction). All statuses influence how others see and respond to us. However, some ascribed, embodied, or achieved statuses take on the power of what sociologists call a **master status**—a status that seems to override all others in our identities.

Master statuses carry with them expectations that may blind people to other facets of our personalities. People quickly make assumptions about what women, Asians, doctors, or alcoholics are like and may judge us according to those expectations rather than our actual attributes. This kind of judgment, often referred to as **stereotyping**, is looked upon as negative or destructive. However, it is important to realize that we all use these expectations in our everyday lives; stereotyping, as problematic as it is, is all but unavoidable.

A **role** is the set of behaviors expected from a particular status position. Sociologists such as Erving Goffman (1956) and Ralph Turner (1978) deliberately use the theatrical analogy to describe how roles provide a kind of script, outlining what we are expected to say and do as a result of our position in the social structure. Professors, then, are expected to be responsible teachers and researchers. Employment contracts and faculty handbooks may specify the role even further: professors must hold a certain number of office hours per week, for example, and must obtain permission from the university in order to skip classes or take a leave of absence. Class clowns don't sign a contract, nor are they issued a handbook, but they have role expectations nonetheless: they are expected to turn a classroom event into a joke whenever possible and to sacrifice their own success in order to provide laughs for others.

ascribed status an inborn status; usually difficult or impossible to change

embodied status a status generated by physical characteristics

achieved status a status earned through individual effort or imposed by others

master status a status that is always relevant and affects all others statuses we possess

stereotyping judging others based on preconceived generalizations about groups or categories of people

role the set of behaviors expected of someone because of his or her status

role conflict experienced when we occupy two or more roles with contradictory expectations

role strain the tension experienced when there are contradictory expectations within one role

role exit the process of leaving a role that we will no longer occupy

Multiple Roles and Role Conflict

In setting out general expectations for behavior, roles help shape our actions in ways that may come to define us to ourselves and others. For example, we often describe ourselves according to personality traits: "I am a responsible person," "a nurturer," "competitive," or "always cheerful." These traits are often the same as the role expectations attached to our various statuses as professionals, parents, athletes, or friends.

Sometimes our multiple roles clash in our everyday lives, a situation known as **role conflict**. Perhaps the most common examples of role conflict involve tensions between professional and familial roles. While preparing for an important meeting at work, you get a call from the school nurse saying your son is ill. Do you leave work to pick him up, thereby missing the meeting? Or do you attend the meeting, all the while distracted by thoughts of your ailing child? **Role strain** occurs when there are contradictory expectations within the same role—for example, many mothers and fathers feel torn between their parental duties to nurture and to discipline and may be able to do one or the other but not both. Sometimes our life takes a turn that means we leave a role we had once occupied, a process known as **role exit**. After a divorce, for example, one is no longer a "husband" or "wife."

Statuses and roles help shape our identities by providing guidelines (sometimes formal, sometimes informal) for our own behavior and by providing the patterns that others use to interact with us. They are part of the construction of our social selves.

Emotions and Personality

As the Spielmans' experience (see this chapter's In Relationships box) demonstrates, role conflicts can be very emotional events. Our emotions are intensely personal responses to the unique situations of our lives—we react with happiness, anger, fear, desire, or sorrow to our own experiences as well as things that happen to others, even events in movies and novels. Individuals sometimes react

Global Perspective

Cross-Cultural Responses to Grief

When it comes to emotions, grief seems one of the strongest: no matter what we believe about the afterlife (or lack thereof), we mourn the passing of our loved ones. In many different societies, the cultural practices surrounding grief and mourning are directed toward giving the deceased a proper send-off and comforting those left behind. But you might be surprised at what other cultures consider comforting in times of grief!

For example, Maoris (the native people of New Zealand) believe that death is not final until all funeral rites are complete—which takes an entire year. Though the body is buried after three days, the relatives and friends of the deceased speak of and to her as if she were alive, until the year of mourning is complete.

The Roma (often incorrectly referred to as "Gypsies") mourn in particularly intense and public ways: both men and women refuse to wash, shave, or comb their hair, neglect to eat for three days, and absorb themselves totally in the process of mourning, sometimes to the point of harming themselves. In addition to this passionate grieving, Roma mourners provide the dead with clothes, money, and other useful objects for their journey to the afterlife. In contrast to Western societies, where black is the prevailing color of grief, Roma mourners traditionally wear white clothes and the favored color for funeral decorations is red.

Red is also the color of grief for the Ashanti of Ghana, who wear red clothing, smear red clay on their arms and foreheads, and wear headbands festooned with red peppers. Proper Ashanti expressions of grief are distinguished by gender: women must wail, and men must fire guns into the air. In fact, the amount of gunpowder used in a funeral is considered a mark of the grieving family's status in the community.

When mourning their dead, many cultures, including the Irish, hold "wakes": long-lasting, heavily attended parties honoring the dead and celebrating their lives. At a wake, while tears may fall, there is also likely to be singing, dancing, drinking, laughing, and all manner of seemingly celebratory emotional outbursts. So despite the fact that all cultures mourn and all individuals feel grief, we can express those emotions in different ways depending on the society of which we are a part.



How Different Cultures Grieve Ashanti women practice a traditional funeral dance (top), to say: Maori warriors row a coffin to their burial ground (center), and mourning Roma women weep over a coffin (bottom).

On the Job

The Wages of Emotion Work

According to executives at Nordstrom department stores, keeping the customer happy is what it's all about. Nordstrom, along with a host of other stores, takes a great interest in developing a corporate culture based on customer service (Zemke and Schaaf 1990; Spector and McCarthy 1996). After all, loyal, satisfied customers are the key to profit making. Nordstrom has become so successful at customer service that it ranks as the national standard. The secret to the company's success lies partly in what Hochschild (1983/1985) calls "the commercialization of feeling," or emotion work.

Nordstrom became a leader in this area through a variety of training techniques. Through staff meetings and workshops, managers coached employees in customer service. Using videotapes and role-playing scenarios, workers learned how to act out various emotions convincingly. But their acting techniques went beyond such displays as smiling and showing friendliness. Salespeople were also supposed to take an in-depth interest in their customers by keeping a "client book" with detailed information about customers' likes and dislikes, favorite brands, style preferences, color choices, and anything else that might help salespeople to better anticipate their needs. Some Nordstrom managers even required their salespeople to perform extra duties while off the clock, like writing thank-you notes to customers and delivering items to their homes.

While these practices were good for Nordstrom's bottom line, the consequences for the workers themselves were a different story. The work of producing emotions takes its toll. Though displays of feeling are actually "sold" to the customer as a kind of commodity, the worker is not necessarily compensated. What was once a private resource has now become a company asset, a new source of labor—emotional labor. But because it is impossible for anyone to be that upbeat all the time, workers must find ways to display or evoke the required emotions. They may do so through surface acting, displaying the emotion by wearing a smile, for example. In contrast, a very dedicated employee may do deep acting by trying to actually feel the emotion that he or she must display. There are consequences for faking or conjuring emotional responses: Workers may experience "emotional exhaustion and burnout" (Grandey 2003) or become estranged from their real feelings (as did Hochschild's flight attendants)—a situation that Marx would refer to as alienation.

Despite a number of employee protests—and a 1991 class-action suit involving off-the-clock work—many of

very differently—what makes one person laugh may make another cry. It would seem, then, that our emotions are the one thing about our lives that aren't dictated by society, that can't be explained with reference to sociological concepts or theories.

Well, our emotions aren't fully determined by society, but they are indeed social. We respond individually, but there also are social patterns in our emotional responses. For example, some emotional responses differ according to the culture—even an emotion as personal as grief, as you will see in the Global Perspective box.

role-taking emotions emotions like sympathy, embarrassment, or shame that require that we assume the perspective of another person or many other people and respond from that person or group's point of view

feeling rules socially constructed norms regarding the expression and display of emotions; expectations about the acceptable or desirable feelings in a given situation

The Social Construction of Emotions

Sometimes our interaction with others affects our emotional responses: we may yell angrily at a political rally along with everyone else, realizing only later that we don't really feel that strongly about the issue at all; we may stifle our tears in front of the coach but shed them freely after the game. **Role-taking emotions**, such as sympathy, embarrassment, and shame, require that we be able to see things from someone else's point of view. When a friend is injured in an accident, you know she is feeling pain, so you feel sympathy for her. **Feeling rules** (Hochschild 1975) are socially



Emotion Work In many sales and service jobs, employees must engage in surface or deep acting to display the emotions that their jobs require.

the problems relating to emotion work remain unresolved (Nogaki 1993). Employees at Nordstrom and elsewhere are still trying to figure out how to preserve some sense of authenticity while making the necessary emotional adjustments to perform their job. The risk remains that employees may become burned out, cynical, or numb from the demands of their occupational roles.

Many of you will be dealing with these same issues in your careers. How will you factor in the cost to yourself of emotional labor? Do you think employees should be compensated financially for emotion work, or do you consider it part of being a good employee? What other kind of compensation—extra days off, more frequent breaks—might be appropriate, especially for salespeople?

constructed norms regarding the appropriate feelings and displays of emotion. We are aware of the pressure to conform to feeling rules even when they are unspoken or we don't agree with them (for example, "Boys don't cry," "No laughing at funerals"). Emotions are thus sociological phenomena, and our individual reactions are influenced (if not determined) by our social and cultural surroundings.

Finally, emotions can also be influenced by social institutions, such as workplaces or religious groups. Arlie Hochschild's (1983) study of flight attendants revealed that when airlines required their employees to be cheerful on the job, the employees' authentic emotions were displaced (they weren't necessarily always cheerful). Flight attendants were required to manage their own feelings as a requirement of their job—what Hochschild calls **emotion work**—maintaining a bright, perky, happy demeanor in-flight, no matter what they actually felt. Because of the structural pressures of emotion work, they became alienated from their own real feelings.

New Interactional Contexts

As we learned in earlier chapters, sociological theories and approaches can change over time—indeed, they must. As the society around them changes,

emotion work (emotional labor) the process of evoking, suppressing, or otherwise managing feelings to create a publicly observable display of emotion



Mediating Interaction Using new technologies like digital video webcams, we can interact with each other outside of physical copresence. How will these new technologies affect our interactions and identities?

sociologists can't always hold on to their tried-and-true ways of looking at the world. New and innovative approaches take the place of traditional paradigms.

Most sociological perspectives on interaction, for example, focus on interactions that occur in **copresence**—that is, when individuals are in one another's physical company. More and more, however, we find ourselves in situations outside physical copresence, aided by rapidly developing technologies. Businesspeople can hold video conferences with colleagues in other cities.

The lovelorn can seek relationship advice and learn the dos and don'ts of sex and dating through late-night radio. Students can instant-message their friends at faraway colleges and carry on real-time text-based conversations. Doctors on the mainland can perform remote surgery on shipboard patients in the middle of the ocean. Do conventional theories have the explanatory power to encompass these new ways of interacting? And since interaction is vital to the development of the self, how do these new ways of interacting create new types of social identities?

Researchers like Josh Meyrowitz (1985), Marc Smith and Peter Kollock (1998), Steve Jones (1997), Philip Howard (Jones and Howard 2003), and Barry Wellman (2004) are among the pioneers in the sociology of technologically mediated interaction. They look at how we interact with each other in cyberspace and via electronic media—and how we interact with the machines themselves. Sherry Turkle, for example, directs the Initiative on Technology and the Self at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where she and others study different ways that technology and identity intersect—through our use of computers, robots, technologically sophisticated toys, and so on (1997, 2005). danah boyd examines how the rapid adoption of social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook into the lives of teenagers is affecting their sense of self and their relationships with others (2007). These and other researchers seek answers to the following question: Who will we become as we increasingly interact with and through machines? Their work is helping sociology enter the age of interactive media and giving us new ways of looking at interactions and identities.

copresence face-to-face interaction or being in the presence of others

Postmodern theorists claim that the role of technology in interaction is one of the primary features of postmodern life. They believe that in the Information Age, social thinkers must arrive at new ways to explain the development of the self in light of the electronic and digital media that inundate our social world (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). We are now exposed to more sources and multiple points of view that may shape our sense of self and socialize us in different ways than ever before (Gottschalk 1993). Kenneth Gergen has coined the term the *saturated self* to refer to this phenomenon and further claims that the postmodern individual tends to have a "pastiche personality," one that "borrow[s] bits and pieces of identity from whatever sources are available" (Gergen 1991, p. 150). What this means is that the self is being constructed in new ways that were unforeseen by

early symbolic interactionists, who could not have imagined that interaction would one day include so many possible influences from both the real world and the world of virtual reality. In Chapter 14, we'll investigate in greater depth how new technologies are affecting social life.

Closing Comments

By now you may be wondering, are we all just prisoners of socialization? How much freedom do we really have if we are all shaped and influenced to such an extent by others and by society? Are our ideas of ourselves as individuals—unique and independent—just a sorry illusion?

It is true that the process of socialization can be rather homogenizing. And it tends to be conservative, pushing people toward some sort of lowest common denominator, toward the mainstream. But still, not everybody ends up the same. In fact, no two people are ever really alike. Despite all the social forces at play in creating the individual, the process by which we gain a sense of self, or become socialized members of society, is never wholly finished.

agency the ability of the individual to act freely and independently

We are not just passive recipients of all the influences around us. We are active participants. We possess what is called **agency**, meaning that we are spontaneous, intelligent, and creative. We exercise free will. Symbolic interactionism tells us that we are always doing the work of interpreting, defining, making sense of, and responding to our social environment. That gives us a great deal of personal power in every social situation. The process is not unilateral; rather it is reciprocal and multidirectional. Remember that you are shaping society as much as it is shaping you.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **What Is Human Nature?** The nature vs. nurture debate argues about the relative influences of genetics and socialization on human behavior. Of course both nature and nurture contribute to human nature, but sociologists emphasize the many ways in which even the most intimate features of the self have a social basis. Biology dictates that we must do certain things to stay alive, but the ways we do them are entirely a product of our societies.
- **The Process of Socialization** A society or group teaches individuals to become functioning members, and individuals learn and internalize the values and norms of the group. One way to understand the importance of socialization is to study the experiences of children who were deprived of interaction at an early age and consequently fail to develop a normal sense of self.
- **Theories of the Self** Sociology offers several theories of the development of the self. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach divides the mind into three interrelated systems: the id, the ego, and the superego. Unlike most sociologists, Freud often focused on instincts and biological drives, but his theory also included the superego, which develops as a result of socialization and inhibits these drives.
- Charles Cooley believed that one's sense of self depends on seeing one's self reflected in interactions with others, which he believed revealed the looking-glass self. Influenced by Cooley, George Herbert Mead articulated a developmental process of self that corresponds to the acquisition of language skills and the growth of mental capacities. These theories share the assumption that in the development process, individuals internalize aspects of society. In contrast, Erving Goffman believed that meaning is constructed through interaction. His approach, dramaturgy, compares social interaction to the theater, where individuals take on roles and act them out to present a favorable impression to their "audience." Goffman is less concerned with the internal self and assumes that situations determine what sort of self we choose to act out.
- **Agents of Socialization** The process of socialization is twofold: society teaches us how to participate, and we internalize the society's values and norms. There are four primary agents of socialization in American society: family, school, peers, and the media. Families teach us the basic values and norms that shape our identity and our first interactions with the wider world. Schools,

the first agents of socialization outside the family, provide education and socialize us through a hidden curriculum that teaches many of the behaviors that will be important later in life. Peers provide very different social skills and often become more immediately significant than the family. The media have become an important agent of socialization, often overriding the family and other institutions in instilling values and norms. Though socialization is most intensive during our early years, adult socialization often requires replacing previously learned norms and values through the process of resocialization.

- **Statuses and Roles** Statuses and roles help shape our identities by providing behavioral guidelines and influencing the ways others respond to us. Statuses may be ascribed or achieved, and they come with social expectations. The expectations of one status may clash with those of another status held simultaneously (role conflict), and sometimes there are contradictory expectations within a single status or role (role strain).
- **The Social Construction of Emotions** Though we tend to believe that our emotions are highly personal and individual, there are social patterns in our emotional responses. Role-taking emotions like sympathy and embarrassment require that we take the perspective of others; feeling rules influence our emotions and the ways we express them.
- **New Interactional Contexts** Though most sociological perspectives on interaction focus on situations in which individuals are in one another's physical presence (copresence), modern society increasingly encourages us to interact with people far away, including those we may never meet in person. Postmodern theorists like Kenneth Gergen believe that interacting through technology exposes us to more information and diverse perspectives that may shape our sense of self and socialize us in new ways.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Think about a social issue about which you hold a very different opinion from your grandparents or people their age, like drug legalization, sexual mores, or even fashion. How might this difference of opinion be the result of different socialization?
2. What are some of the reasons symbolic interactionism is useful for explaining the development of the self?
3. According to Erving Goffman, we all engage in impression management to control what others think of us. Choose one interaction and list every aspect of the personal front you use to manage the impression you create.
4. In a con game the criminals usually allow the victim or "mark" to win a little, then take him for everything, leaving the victim angry and embarrassed. In order to prevent retaliation, accomplices help the victim redefine the situation to make it bearable, or "cool the mark out." Erving Goffman pointed out that life abounds with situations that people redefine this way. Can you think of a situation where you helped to "cool the mark out"?
5. How do the theories on the development of the self in this chapter differ one from another? Which theory best explains your experience? Why?
6. Are the basic principles your family taught you supported or undermined by your peers? Can you name two or more of your roles that sometimes conflict?
7. Describe a situation in which you were resocialized. Perhaps you met someone from a different culture and abandoned some cultural stereotypes, or you learned to fit into a new work environment. Do you think that your resocialization is permanent, or will you revert to your old ways?
8. Describe yourself in terms of your statuses and roles. Which are master statuses? Which roles are less important? Which statuses have changed over the course of your lifetime? Which roles do you anticipate occupying in the future?
9. What feeling rules do you find yourself obeying? Do you expect the same of others? Have you ever done emotion work? What were the circumstances?
10. Do you agree with Gergen's claim that the postmodern person has a pastiche personality? Why? Do you think the internet provides a unique type of information, or could a well-read person of your grandparents' generation have accessed the same types of knowledge?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

FeralChildren.com A website with extensive information and links about feral children through the ages, both real and fictional.

Goffman, Erving. 1967. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. One of the finest discussions of the effects of total institutions like asylums.

Hochschild, Arlie. 2003. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press. A classic study of the consequences of emotion work.

Mead, George Herbert. 1934/1967. *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. The foundation for the theory of symbolic interactionism. Mead gives a detailed explanation of how individuals internalize aspects of society.

Nell. 2004. Dir. Michael Apted. Fox Home Entertainment. Jodie Foster portrays a woman who has lived for years without human contact after her speech-impaired mother died. She is discovered by a doctor, played by Liam Neeson, who tries to understand her.

Six Degrees of Separation. 2000. Dir. Fred Schepis. MGM. The film, starring Will Smith, is based on a true story about a young man who deftly uses impression management to convince upper-class New Yorkers that he is one of them.

Spigel, Lynn. 1992. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A social history of the impact of television on U.S. popular culture and how mass media became a significant agent of socialization.

Swofford, Anthony. 2005. *Jarhead*. New York: Scribner. A fascinating memoir about life in the U.S. Marine Corps during the First Gulf War that illustrates the effect of a total institution.

The Wild Child. 2001. Dir. Francois Truffaut. MGM. This film is based on a real-life, eighteenth-century behavioral scientist's efforts to civilize a feral boy, who was found living like an animal in the woods. Victor, the Wild Boy of Aveyron, is perhaps the best-known case of a feral child.



CHAPTER 6

Separate and Together: Life in Groups

On November 4, 2000, Robert Burgess woke up in a Los Angeles emergency room with no memory of what had happened to him the night before. How had he broken his collarbone and wrist, and why was there bleeding in his kidney? Burgess couldn't remember because his blood alcohol level had been measured at .19 percent—two and a half times the legal limit in California.

Eventually, he was able to recall the previous evening. He had attended a party at the Sigma Pi fraternity house at UCLA, where, as a pledge, he was being evaluated by the Sigma Pi brothers for full membership. He was told that he could either drink alcohol or a nonalcoholic beverage of unknown origin stirred up by the brothers; if he refused, he would relinquish his bid for membership. Burgess chose the alcohol and handed over his car keys for safety. He was then led, blindfolded, through the frat house and forced to have a drink in each room. Members of the Chi Omega sorority who were at the party scribbled on his drunken body in permanent marker. At some point during the evening, he passed out, but he later apparently woke up, retrieved his car keys, and drove away—only to crash into a wall and end up in the ER.

No doubt you've heard stories like this before. Generally referred to as *hazing*, this process is meant to test newcomers and transform them into group members—if you can endure the abuse, you can be part of the group. Although hazing is usually associated with college fraternities, it has been known to occur in high school clubs, athletic teams, sororities, and even police and fire departments and the military. In fact, according to a study in the medical journal *Contemporary Pediatrics* (2000), 24 percent of high school church group members reported being hazed. Although hazing is against the law in almost every state and is usually prohibited by group charters, it is still a popular—though risky—way of initiating new members. Every year, it results in at least one student death and countless injuries, and alcohol plays a major role in most of these incidents (Nuwer 1999).

In November 2001, with his injuries healed, Robert Burgess filed a civil suit against both the fraternity and the sorority, alleging that he was forced to overindulge in alcohol and that the party hosts had returned his car keys while he was obviously too drunk to drive. Burgess's lawsuit highlights a key question in all hazing cases: Who is

SocIndex

Then and Now

1962: Number of women participating in college sports just before passage of Title IX legislation prohibiting sex discrimination in federally funded educational programs: 62,000

2005: Number of women participating in college sports 33 years after passage of Title IX legislation: 205,492

Here and There

The United Nations: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides for freedom of association for all persons in 1948

United States: The U.S. Supreme Court affirms the right to private, consensual intimacy for gays and lesbians in 2003

This and That

Number of confirmed African American members of the top five country clubs in Dallas, Texas, in 2007: Zero

Number of hate crimes committed against African Americans in Texas in 2007: 103

responsible when the consequences of hazing include illegality, injury, or even death? The host group or the individual who submits to hazing?

The relationship between the individual and the group is a complex one. We sometimes do things in groups, both good and bad, that we might never do as individuals. Exploring group dynamics from a sociological perspective can help us understand and even eliminate problems like hazing and maximize the benefits of group life as well.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

This chapter explores some of the different ways we organize our lives in groups. Here you will gain some of the analytic tools you can use to understand the specific groups we'll be investigating in later chapters. Concepts such as peer pressure, teamwork, bureaucratization, and anomie can be fruitfully applied to analyses of families, work and volunteer organizations, political groups, and religious communities. Consider this chapter an introduction to group dynamics in general—a springboard from which to begin our sociological analysis of particular types of groups. As you read, think about the groups you belong to and how they affect your values and behavior. What is your influence on such groups? Have you ever "gone along" with group rules but later wished you hadn't?

group a collection of people who share some attribute, identify with one another, and interact with each other

crowd a temporary gathering of people in a public place; members might interact but do not identify with each other and will not remain in contact

aggregate a collection of people who share a physical location but do not have lasting social relations

primary groups the people who are most important to our sense of self; members' relationships are typically characterized by face-to-face interaction, high levels of cooperation, and intense feelings of belonging

secondary groups larger and less intimate than primary groups; members' relationships are usually organized around a specific goal and are often temporary

What Is a Group?

We often use the term *group* to refer to any collection of two or more people who have something in common, whether it's their appearance, culture, occupation, or just a physical proximity. When sociologists speak of a **group** or social group, however, they mean a collection of people who not only share some attribute but also identify with one another and have ongoing social relations—like a family, a *Star Trek* fan club, a soccer team, a sorority, or the guys you play poker with every month.

A **crowd**, therefore (such as the throngs of sightseers at a tourist attraction or people who gather to watch a fire), would not usually be considered a group in the sociological sense. While crowd members do interact (Goffman 1971), they don't necessarily have a sense of common identity, and they rarely assemble again once they disperse. Collections of people such as crowds, audiences, and queues are known as **aggregates**—people who happen to find themselves together in a particular physical location. People in aggregates don't form lasting social relations, but people in groups do.

Similarly, people belonging in the same category—everyone 18 years of age or all owners of Chevy trucks, for example—don't regularly interact with one another or have any common sense of connection other than their status in the category.

Primary and Secondary Groups

Groups in which we are intimately associated with the other members, such as families and close friends, are known as **primary groups**. Primary groups typically involve more face-to-face interaction, greater cooperation, and deeper feelings of belonging. Members often associate with each other for no other reason than to spend time together.

Charles Horton Cooley (1909) introduced the term *primary* for this type of group because such groups have the most profound effects on us as individuals. Primary groups provide most of our emotional satisfaction through interaction with other members, are responsible for much of our socialization, and remain central to our identity throughout our lives. We measure who we are, and perhaps how we've changed, by the way we interact with primary group members. To Cooley (as we saw in Chapter 5), primary groups represent the most important "looking glasses" in the formation of our social selves—they constitute our "significant others."

Larger, less intimate groups are known as **secondary groups**: these include coworkers, college classes, athletic organizations, labor unions, and political parties. Interaction here is more formal and impersonal. Secondary groups are



Primary Groups Are Typically Families or Close Friends
Deborah Daniels (front left, in pink) opened her home to four generations of her family after Hurricane Katrina destroyed their New Orleans home in 2005.

usually organized around a specific activity or the accomplishment of a task. Membership is often temporary and usually does not carry the same potential for emotional satisfaction that primary group membership does. Nonetheless, a great deal of what we do involves secondary groups.

Because secondary groups can include larger numbers of people and be geographically diffuse, membership can be almost completely anonymous. At the same time, however, secondary group membership often generates primary group ties as well. Close personal relationships can begin with the more impersonal ties of secondary groups (the friends you make at work, for example) and are sometimes a direct outgrowth of our attempts to counteract the depersonalizing nature of secondary groups. For this reason, it is sometimes difficult to classify a particular group. Your soccer team may indeed be goal oriented, but you've probably also developed personal ties to at least some of your teammates. So is your team a primary or secondary group? It features elements of both, proving that real life can be even more complex than the models sociologists devise to explain it.

Social Networks

You and your family, your friends, peers, colleagues, teachers, and coworkers constitute a **social network**. Sociologists who study networks call the connections between individuals **social ties**. Social ties can be direct, such as the tie between you and your friend, or indirect, such as the tie between you and your friend's cousin, whom you've never met.

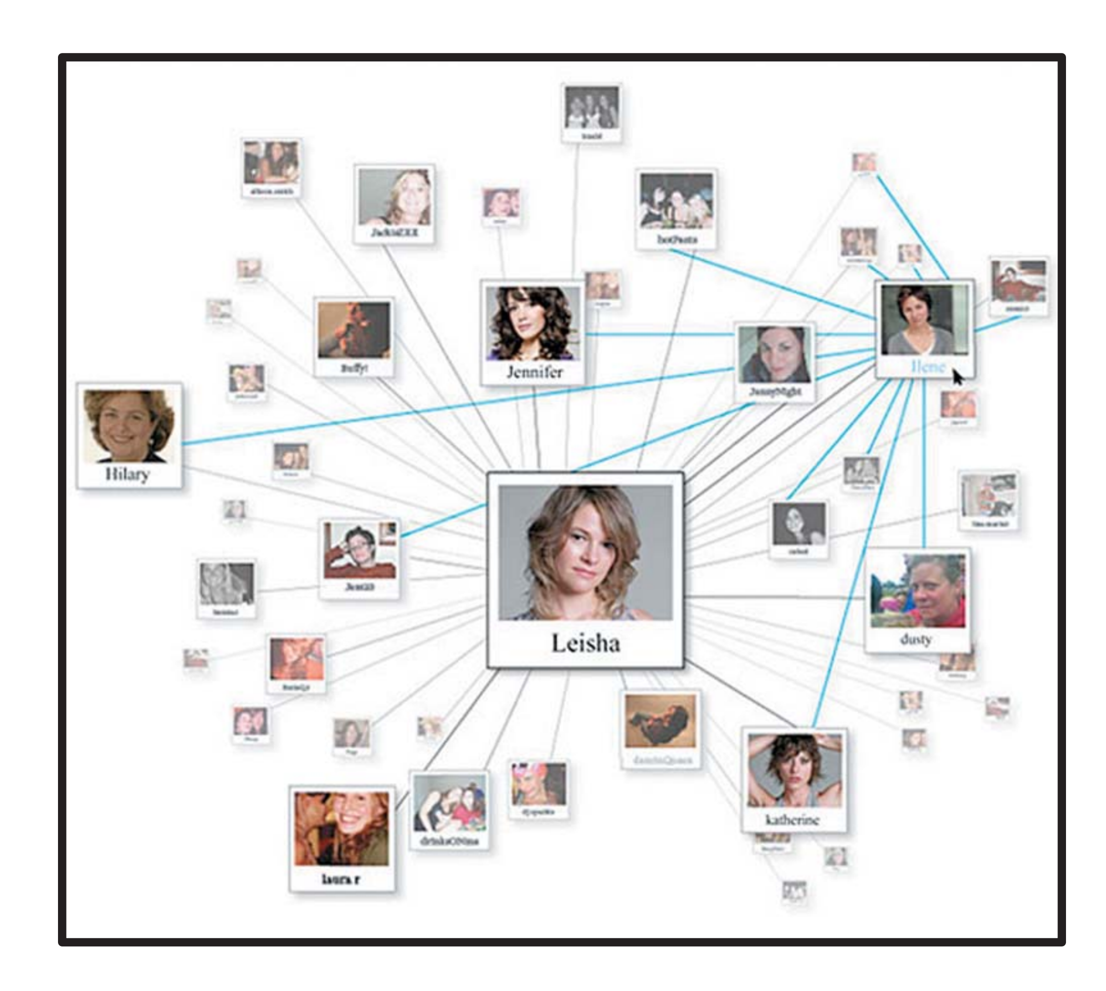
To understand how a social network works, think of yourself at the center with lines connecting you to all your friends, family, peers, and so on (see Figure 6.1, p. 159). These lines represent direct ties. Now think about all the family, friends, and peers who belong to each of *these* people. The lines connecting you to this second group must pass through the people in your first network; this second set of lines represents indirect ties. Indirect ties can include business transactions—flows of goods, services, materials, or monies—between organizations or nations. They can even represent flows of ideas. For instance, when you read ancient Greek philosophy, you become part of a network that spans centuries of writing and thinking and educating.

Sociologists who study networks are concerned not only with how networks are constructed but also with how influence moves along a network, and thus which persons or organizations have more influence than others within the network. In his book *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age* (2003), sociologist Duncan Watts examined not only the connections individuals have to one another but also how those connections shape our actions. He found, for example, that we may change our minds about whom to vote for if enough of our friends are voting for the other candidate.

How does the flow of influence work at the level of an international organization? We could take the World Trade Organization (WTO) as an example. Comprising 148 member nations, the WTO monitors the trade rules between countries and resolves international disputes over trade. While all member nations are part of the network, they hold different positions of power within it. We might hypothesize that nations that win the most disputes have the most influence within the network. But Joseph Conti (2003, 2005) finds that while the United States, one of the most powerful members of the WTO, is involved in the vast majority of disputes, it usually loses. The question that remains for the network theorist is whether or not "winning" or "losing" is an effective way to measure influence. What Conti concludes is that America's centrality, a network analysis term that means an actor with

social network the web of direct and indirect ties connecting an individual to other people who may also affect her

social ties connections between individuals



Social Networks This network of friends and lovers from the television show *The L Word* exemplifies how social ties directly and indirectly bind people.

the most ties in a given network, is what gives it powerful influence and not the actual outcomes of the disputes.

Jobs and Networks

Some sociologists look at how personal networks, including both direct and indirect ties, influence a person's life. For example, in the pathbreaking work "The Strength of Weak Ties" (1973), Mark Granovetter measures how a person's distant relatives and acquaintances, attached to different social networks, pass along information about job opportunities. An individual with high socioeconomic status, or SES (taking into account income, education, and occupation), for example, usually has relatives and acquaintances with similarly high SES. Because those relatives and acquaintances belong to different social networks, all with high SES, the job seeker now has indirect connections with a vast array of high-SES contacts who can provide job leads. In other words, if your father, mother, and sister are all actors, you would likely "inherit" a network of acting contacts. The implications of Granovetter's findings are that people tend to form homogeneous social networks—to have direct ties to those who are like themselves, whether through race, class background, national origin, or religion. Further, individuals with low SES are likely to form direct ties to others with low SES and thus indirect ties as well. Information about job opportunities is less likely to travel along those networks.

Gender and Networks

More recent findings about the strength of weak ties, from Matt Hoffman and Lisa Torres (2002), indicate that women who are part of networks that include more men than women are more likely to hear about good job leads. But if their networks include more women than men, then those same women are less likely to hear about quality jobs. The number of men or women within a man's network doesn't seem to matter; men are just as likely to get quality information about job opportunities from both men and women in their social networks. Hoffman and Torres offer two rationales to explain their findings. First, women are simply less likely than men to hear about job leads. Second, women who do hear about them are more likely to pass along that information to men; they may feel threatened by the idea of more women in their places of employment and fear loss of their own jobs.

So it's not just what you know, it's whom you know. And whom they know, and whom *they* know.

Separate from Groups: Anomie

According to Durkheim, all the social groups with which we are connected (families, peer groups, workplaces, and so on) have this particular feature: the norms of the group place certain limits on our individual actions. For example, you may have wanted to backpack through Europe after you graduated from high school, but your parents demanded that you stay home, work, and save money for college. Durkheim argues that we need these limits—otherwise, we would want many things we could never have, and the lengths to which we would go in search of our unattainable desires would be boundless. Think about it: if you were always searching for but never getting the things you wanted, you would be very unhappy and over time might even become suicidal. Durkheim (1893/1964) called such a state of normlessness **anomie** and believed that group membership keeps us from feeling it. So group membership not only anchors us to the social world—it's what keeps us alive.

Durkheim was worried that in our increasingly fragmented modern society, anomie would become more and more common. Other scholars share Durkheim's position, noting that Americans today are less likely than ever to belong to the types of civic organizations and community groups that can combat anomie and keep us connected to one another. Harvard professor Robert Putnam, in his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2001), argues that we no longer practice the type of "civic engagement" that builds democratic community and keeps anomie at bay: fewer people bowl in leagues than ever before, and people are less likely to participate in organizations like the League of Women Voters, PTA, or Kiwanis or engage in regular activities like monthly bridge games or Sunday picnics. He even offers statistics on how many angry drivers "flip the bird" at other drivers every year—all part of his argument about our disintegrating collective bonds.

anomie "normlessness," term used to describe the alienation and loss of purpose that result from weaker social bonds and an increased pace of change

Putnam's critics argue that he longs for "good old days" that can never be again (and perhaps never were) and that he disregards the many new ways of staying connected. For example, the internet has made it possible for fans of different books, bands, and films to come together in larger numbers than ever—albeit in cyberspace. Activist networks address social problems via online communications. Support groups form to deal with different personal issues or medical conditions. All of these involve people who might never have otherwise met. It may be true that we don't belong to bridge clubs anymore—but we have a new set of resources to help us connect with others and avoid anomie. If both types of groups can serve as social anchors, then is one necessarily better than the other?



The Good Old Days? In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam argues that the decline of group activities, like bingo nights or league bowling, represents a decline in civic engagement. However, technologies like the internet and social networking sites have allowed large numbers of people to gather, connect, and avoid anomie.



Social Networking Sites: Pros and Cons

Who's reading about your life online? More people than you think . . .

In the past several years, the news has been full of stories detailing problems that have emerged as a result of social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook. College and high school students have been suspended or expelled from their institutions because of what they have posted in their profiles at Facebook. In 2005, Cameron Walker was expelled from Fisher College after joining a controversial online group. In 2007, Hayden Barnes was expelled from Valdosta State College for criticizing the construction of two new parking garages on campus in his Facebook profile. School administrators have officially disciplined numerous college and high school students for posting pictures of underaged drinking or doing illegal drugs. Law enforcement officers and school officials frequently use MySpace and Facebook to target and locate illegal activity. In fact, activity on MySpace has been used to arrest suspects on charges of conspiracy to commit murder, sexual crimes, and assault.

One commonly reported practice is the use of Facebook and MySpace to screen prospective employees' lifestyles. Increasingly, individuals are being denied jobs due to the pictures and information that they have posted on their personal profiles. Usually cited are pictures of drinking, illegal drug use, and smoking as "red flags" about personal integrity and interpersonal skills. With this in mind, many people are choosing to limit access to their profiles. In many cases, people are only allowed to access other's profiles after placing a personal request and being approved.

Limiting access to personal profiles runs counter to the "six degrees of separation" principle, which suggests that everyone in the world is connected to everyone else within six steps: "If you know 100 people, and each of them knows 100 more, then you have 10,000 friends-of-friends. Take that a step further to three degrees and you are connected to one million people. At six degrees, the number increases to nine billion" (Schofield 2004). MySpace and Facebook's profiling technology means that anyone you might be interested in could be vouched for (or against) by a friend or a friend-of-a-friend. Using this same reasoning, some employers are looking to Facebook and MySpace friend lists to find references for prospective employees. Eve Tahmincioglu reports "In many cases, if an HR person shares a job seeker's connection on a networking site, they'll just e-mail that contact to find out the dirt on the applicant without permission from the applicant" (2008). Although many individuals are comfortable with placing a casual acquaintance on their friends list, they may not be as comfortable with having a prospective employer use, for an example, the boyfriend of a classmate as a personal reference.

LinkedIn.com provides a professional networking alternative to more casual sites like MySpace and Facebook. LinkedIn is a business-oriented online social networking site created in 2002 and launched in 2003. As of summer 2008, it had more than 24 million registered users. The purpose of LinkedIn is to allow the user to create a list of people (called "connections") that they know and trust in their business. This original list of connections is then used to generate a



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Virtual Communities and "Netiquette"

The idea of what constitutes a group has necessarily changed as modern society has evolved through the Industrial Revolution to the current Information Age. Just what do you call a bunch of people who gather together to share interests, offer advice, provide support, or exchange ideas but who never meet in person and may not even know each other's real names? Such groups have come to be known as **electronic or virtual communities**.

When usage of the internet became more widespread in the early 1990s, there were few rules about how people should communicate. In addition, early electronic communities lacked the sense of organization that we often associate with other kinds of groups. Soon, though, sociologists who



network of their direct connections, the connections of their connections (second-degree connections), and the connections of second-degree connections (third-degree connections). This social network can be used both by job seekers and by employers. The details that are listed in a user's profile include educational and professional experience as well as the useful job skills that they possess. Users are asked to identify connections that can serve as professional references.

In sociological terms, social networking sites aim to help people make the most of their primary and secondary groups. For example, they might keep you in touch with family members or friends who have moved out of the neighborhood. But secondary groups can be altered even more profoundly. In the past, such secondary associations as people who attended the same college, came from the same hometown, or liked the same bands weren't very meaningful because there was no way of searching for other users based on their interests, backgrounds, and demographic details. Using a professional networking site such as LinkedIn as a public online social network while setting Facebook and MySpace accounts to privacy mode allows an individual to take advantage of existing social networks without the risk of having their private lives exposed. Even so, users of casual social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook should think twice about what they post on their personal profiles.

Already, some media outlets are cautioning against collecting too many online references. While LinkedIn provides an initial fulcrum for job seekers, many employers still don't view the use of personal online references as a legitimate professional practice. As Chuck Pappalardo, managing director of Trilogy Search, a retained executive recruitment firm headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area, says: "At this juncture, Facebook is simply not a serious site for business at the level I place folks. LinkedIn, however, is becoming increasingly more useful as a networking tool and in identifying candidates. But any posted reference can't be taken seriously on any level."

As social networking sites grow more sophisticated, they may play an even greater role in our primary and secondary groups. They also have the potential to affect relationships in both positive and negative ways. By taking advantage of friendship-based and business-based networking sites, individuals are able to use their internet connections to their advantage recreationally and professionally.

study the internet (Jones 1997; Smith and Kollock 1998) began to see group traditions, roles, and norms emerging, as online members were socialized into belonging. In fact, it appears that social rules are as important as technical conventions when it comes to using the internet. For example, on eBay, where strangers buy and sell everything from old T-shirts to Old Masters paintings in an environment of mutual trust, participants feel confident that their payments will be received and their merchandise shipped because everyone has agreed to a shared set of rules and regulations.

In addition to the social rules that may govern a specific chat room or bulletin board, most online communications also observe "netiquette"—the standards for communicating. Examples of netiquette include prohibitions against "yelling" (writing in all capital letters) or "flame wars" (virulent online arguments). A special online language has also evolved, which includes new words and phrases (such as "g2g"

electronic or virtual communities
social groups whose interactions are mediated through information technologies, particularly the internet

group dynamics the patterns of interaction between groups and individuals

dyad a two-person social group

triad a three-person social group

in-group a group that one identifies with and feels loyalty toward

for "got to go") and emoticons like those on p. 102.

This Data Workshop asks you to conduct a sort of "cyber-ethnography" to examine how group values and norms are expressed in electronic communities. In addition to doing some participant observation in a group, you will also be gathering material from existing sources and doing a content analysis of what you find (see Chapter 3 for a review of these research methods). Choose an active chat room, newsgroup, or bulletin board, preferably one that is not bizarre or extreme. Gather examples of the roles, language, norms, and expectations, either formal or informal, of this online group. One place to look is in the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section of a website, but the elements of cyber-group life are present in all online interactions in one form or another. So immerse yourself in those interactions until you feel you have a sense of the life of this particular group. Here are some guidelines to follow as you do your research.

Roles
Observe the role that a "moderator" or "webmaster" plays in presenting information to "newbies" (those new to the group) or sanctioning those who violate group norms. See if you can identify any other online roles, such as "lurkers" (those who log on to a site but don't participate in the interaction).

Language
What kind of language is used by members? Make a list of commonly used terms, such as "emoticons" and acronyms like LOL ("laugh out loud"), IMHO ("in my humble opinion"), and ^5 ("high five").

Norms and Expectations
What are some of the social rules that apply to members of the electronic community? What happens if someone engages in a "flame war," sends "spam" to the list, or uses too much bandwidth for messages? Document how members sanction each other for violations in behavior.

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare written notes that you can refer to in class. Share your observations and responses to the above questions with other students in small-group discussions. Listen for any differences in each other's insights.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay describing your observations and answering the questions above. Make sure to refer to specific features of your online group to support your analysis.

By taking part in this cyber-ethnography, you have begun to identify the ways that group life is created, maintained, and changed online by group members who might share many things but never actual physical copresence.

Group Dynamics

Sociologists have always been interested in how groups form, change, disintegrate, achieve great goals, or commit horrendous wrongs—add all these phenomena together, and they constitute **group dynamics**. How do groups affect an individual's sense of self? What forces bind members to a group? How do groups influence their members? When do groups excel at the tasks they undertake? What are the qualities of group leaders? When are groups destructive to the individual? How can relations between groups be improved? We will attempt to answer some of these questions in the next sections.

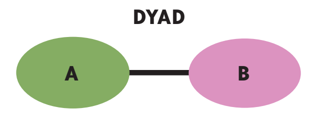
Dyads, Triads, and More

The size of a group affects how it operates and the types of individual relationships that can occur within it. A **dyad**, the smallest possible social group, consists of only two members—a married couple, two best friends, or two siblings, for example (Simmel 1950). Although relationships in a dyad are usually intense, dyads are also fundamentally unstable, because if one person wants out of the group, it's over. A **triad** is slightly more stable because the addition of a third person means that conflicts between two members can be refereed by the third. As additional people are added to a group, it may no longer be possible for everyone to know or interact with everyone else personally (think of all the residents of a large apartment building), and so policies may have to be established to help with communication and resolve conflicts. The features of dyads and triads point out an important axiom of group dynamics in general: the smaller a group is, the more likely it is to be based on personal ties; larger groups are more likely to be based on rules and regulations (as we'll see later when we examine bureaucracies).

In-Groups and Out-Groups

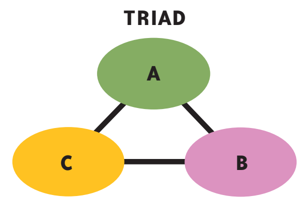
An **in-group** is a group a member identifies with and feels loyalty toward. This member usually feels a certain distinctness from or even hostility toward other groups, known as

DYAD



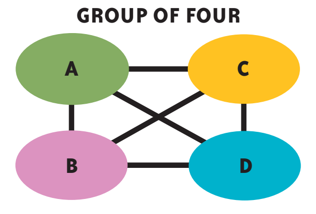
One Relationship

TRIAD



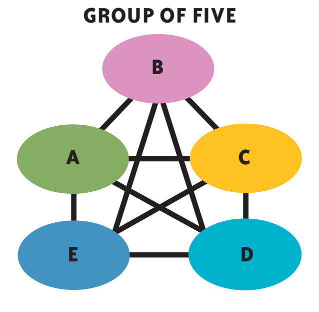
Three Relationships

GROUP OF FOUR



Six Relationships

GROUP OF FIVE



Ten Relationships

FIGURE 6.1 The Effects of Group Size on Relationships
Smaller groups feature fewer and more intimate personal ties; larger groups feature more relationships, but they are also likely to be more impersonal.

out-groups. Most of us are associated with a number of in- and out-groups, stemming from our ethnic, familial, professional, or educational backgrounds, for example. Group loyalty and cohesion intensify when differences are strongly defined between the "us" of an in-group and the "them" of an out-group; we may also feel a sense of superiority toward those who are excluded from our in-group. School sports rivalries make clear in-group and out-group distinctions, as evident in this popular slogan seen on T-shirts and bumper stickers all over Los Angeles: "My favorite teams are UCLA and whoever's playing USC!"

As we might expect, in-group membership can be a source of prejudice and discrimination based on class, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or political opinion. The differences attributed to an out-group often become exaggerated, if not entirely fabricated to begin with—"All Irishmen are drunks," or "All Mexicans are lazy," for example. Robert Merton (1968) noted the phenomenon that the same qualities or behaviors are viewed positively when they are "ours" and negatively when they are "theirs": the out-group is "lazy," whereas the in-group is "laid-back"; they are "snobbish," we are "classy"; they are "zealots," we are "devout." At their worst, in-group/out-group dynamics create the backdrop for social tragedies such as slavery and genocide.

out-group any group an individual feels opposition, rivalry, or hostility toward

reference group a group that provides a standard of comparison against which we evaluate ourselves

Reference Groups

Our perception of a group and what it takes to be a bona fide member can be crucial to our sense of self. When a group provides standards by which a person evaluates his own personal attributes, it is known as a **reference group**. A common reference group is one's family. We often try to "live up to" the standards of our parents, siblings, and extended family members. If we don't see ourselves as having the qualities of a "true" family member, we may adopt a negative self-image. A reference group may also be one to which we aspire to belong but of which we are not yet members; we saw one example at the beginning of this chapter, the pledge who wanted to belong to the fraternity so much that he was willing to risk his own health and safety.

DATA WORKSHOP



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

The Twenty Statements Test: Who Am I?

This Data Workshop, combining material from Chapters 5 and 6, asks you to look at how social affiliations with groups help shape our self-concept. You will be using a method that is similar to survey research to complete this Data Workshop (see Chapter 3 for a review). Start your work, however, by completing Step 1 below, without reading any farther than the line of stars!

Step 1: The Twenty Statements Test (TST)
In the spaces provided below, write down twenty different responses to the question "Who am I?" Don't worry about evaluating the logic or importance of your responses—just

write the answers in the order they occur to you. Give yourself five minutes to complete this task.

1. I am ______________________________________.
2. I am ______________________________________.
3. I am ______________________________________.
4. I am ______________________________________.
5. I am ______________________________________.
6. I am ______________________________________.
7. I am ______________________________________.
8. I am ______________________________________.
9. I am ______________________________________.
10. I am ______________________________________.
11. I am ______________________________________.
12. I am ______________________________________.
13. I am ______________________________________.
14. I am ______________________________________.
15. I am ______________________________________.
16. I am ______________________________________.
17. I am ______________________________________.
18. I am ______________________________________.
19. I am ______________________________________.
20. I am ______________________________________.

****

Step 2: Analysis
Now it's time to analyze your responses. Rate each one according to the four categories listed below. Evaluate, to the best of your ability, which responses fall into the A-mode, B-mode, C-mode, and D-mode categories.

A-mode responses are the type of physical characteristics found on your driver's license: "I am a blonde"; "I am short"; I am a Wisconsin resident."

B-mode responses describe socially defined statuses usually associated with group membership of some sort: "I am a college student"; "I am a Catholic"; I am an African American."

C-mode responses describe styles of behavior or emotional states: "I am a happy person"; "I am a country music fan"; "I am a fashionable dresser."

D-mode responses are more general than individual: "I am part of the universe"; "I am a human being."

You may have some difficulty deciding how to categorize some of your responses—for example, where does "I am an American" go—in A, B, or D? Use your best judgment. Count the number of each type of response. Now compare the totals—which category got the most responses?

You may want to compare your findings with those of your classmates; where do your fellow students get their sense of self? We predict that, even if you yourself gave more B-mode responses, the predominant mode in your classroom is C. Those with more B-mode responses base their self-concept on group membership and institutional roles. Those with more C-mode responses see themselves as more independent and define themselves according to their individual actions and emotions rather than their connections to others. It is likely that there are few (if any) people whose responses fall predominantly in the A or D mode. Those with more A-mode responses may feel that they have a "skin deep" self-concept, based more on their appearance to others than on their internal qualities. Those with more D-mode responses are harder to categorize and may feel uncertain about the source of their sense of self.

The TST was developed by social psychologist Manfred Kuhn (Kuhn and McPartland 1954) as a way of determining the degree to which we base our self-concepts on our membership in different groups. The test was used later by Louis Zurcher (1977) to study the changing self-images of Americans. Zurcher found that in the 1960s individuals were more likely to give B-mode responses, but in the 1970s and 1980s people were more likely to give C-mode responses. While you might think it better to be an independent actor than to be defined by your group membership, Zurcher and his colleague Ralph Turner became concerned about this trend away from group identification and toward a more radically individualistic sense of self. Why were they so concerned?

The primary characteristics of the C-mode, or "impulsive," self (Turner 1976) are the pursuit of individual satisfaction, an orientation toward the present, and a sense that the individual should not be linked to others and that group obligations inhibit individual expression. The primary characteristics of the B-mode, or "institutional," self are a willingness to adhere to group standards and to accept group obligations as well as an orientation toward the future and a sense that the individual is linked to others. Zurcher and Turner worried that a society full of self-interested (and even selfish), impulsive individuals might no longer care about the common good and would only work to satisfy their own needs.



Group Cohesion "People easily form clubs, fraternal societies, and the like, based on congeniality, which may give rise to real intimacy. . . . Where there is a little common interest and activity, kindness grows like weeds by the roadside."
—Charles Horton Cooley, 1909

Do you do things for your own benefit or for the benefit of the group? What do you think are the consequences for a society overwhelmingly populated by one personality type or the other? Are these two orientations mutually exclusive, or can you combine the best parts of both? If the latter, what can you do in order to bring that about?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Make some notes on your findings to share with other students in small-group discussions. How many "institutional" or "impulsive" selves are part of your discussion group? Do Zurcher and Turner's categories satisfactorily describe the way we consider our selves now, in the twenty-first century? Perhaps you can come up with a new category of self that better describes the individuals in your group.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Find a small sample population of 3 to 5 other people and administer the TST to each of them. Collect, compare, and analyze your findings from the group. Answer the following questions in a three-page essay: If the majority of your fellow Americans fell into the same category, what would this mean for society? How would schools, families, workplaces, sports teams, governments, and charitable organizations operate if almost everyone fell into the same category? Make sure to refer to your TST in the essay, and include it as an attachment to your paper.

group cohesion the sense of solidarity or loyalty that individuals feel toward a group to which they belong

groupthink in very cohesive groups, the tendency to enforce a high degree of conformity among members, creating a demand for unanimous agreement

Group Cohesion

A basic concept in the study of group dynamics is **group cohesion**, the sense of solidarity or team spirit that members feel toward their group. Put another way, group cohesion is the force that binds them together. A group is said to be more cohesive when individuals feel strongly tied to membership, so it is likely that a group of fraternity brothers is more cohesive than a random group of classmates. The life of a group depends on at least a minimum level of cohesion. If members begin to lose their strong sense of commitment, the group will gradually disintegrate (Friedkin 2004).

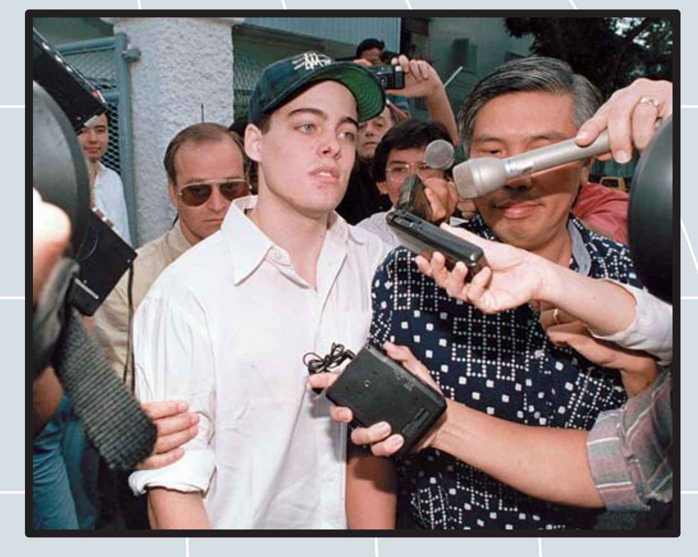
Cohesion is enhanced in a number of ways. It tends to rely heavily on interpersonal factors such as shared values and shared demographic traits like race, age, gender, or class (Cota et al. 1995). We can see this kind of cohesion, for example, in a clique of junior high school girls or members of a church congregation. Cohesion also tends to rely on an attraction to the group as a whole or members' ability to cooperate in achieving goals (Thye and Lawler 2002). This might help explain cohesion among fans of the Green Bay Packers or members of a local Elks lodge.

GROUPTHINK Whereas a high degree of cohesion might seem desirable, it can also lead to the kind of poor decision making seen in fraternity hazings. In a process Irving Janus (1971, 1982) called **groupthink**, highly cohesive groups

Global Perspective

Group vs. Individual Norms: The Caning of Michael Fay

In March 1994, Michael Fay, an eighteen-year-old American citizen living with his mother in Singapore, was convicted of vandalism in a Singaporean court and sentenced to a $2,200 fine (in U.S. dollars), four months in prison, and six lashes with a rattan cane on his bare buttocks. By contrast, in the United States, Fay would have almost certainly ended up with a punishment no more severe than probation. Although many countries use caning or whipping to punish illegal activity, because Fay was an American, his six lashes quickly became international news. Opinions diverged on whether caning was an appropriate consequence for Fay's offense. Groups like Amnesty International describe caning as torture. The four-foot-long, half-inch-thick bamboo cane used to administer the blows is soaked in saltwater, and a trained prison guard or martial arts expert administers the strokes. The victim is tied to an A- or X-shaped frame to keep him from collapsing or fainting. Each hit with the cane is meant to split the skin, causing bleeding and eventual scarring, and those who have been caned describe not being able to sit down or lie on their back for weeks afterward.



Michael Fay After receiving four strokes from a rattan cane, Fay was released from prison and allowed to return to the United States.

Before the saga ended (with Fay on the receiving end of only four lashes, a reduced sentence), hundreds of articles had been written, 34 members of Congress had signed a petition requesting clemency, and then-president Bill Clinton spoke out on three separate occasions against the caning. Despite the official outcry, however, some Americans expressed support for caning, even going so far as to suggest that such penalties be imported to the United States. In fact, in May 1994, two months after Michael Fay's conviction, three different lawmakers tried to introduce pro-caning bills in three different legislative bodies (Poor 1994).

Singapore is a country with a low incidence of crime. Though it would be tempting to thus view caning as a possible remedy for out-of-control crime in the United States, there are also demographic and societal explanations for Singapore's low crime rate. First, the demographics of the two countries are radically different from each other (Walsh 1994). Singapore, for instance, has a population of around 3 million and is approximately 76 percent ethnic Chinese, with a relatively cohesive set of mores. The United States, on the other hand, is composed of hundreds of different peoples, and the debate over whether we share a common culture is ongoing.

There is also a fundamental difference in philosophy between the East and the West regarding the importance of the individual. Jon Huntsman Jr., a former U.S. ambassador to Singapore, described the country as "a very traditional, Confucianist society in which the family is still the most important unit . . . a society that believes in the well-being of the whole, not necessarily the individual" (Poor 1994). This means that in Singapore, the group (family, community, society) is seen as more important than the individual—and the idea that the individual should suffer severe punishment for his offense against the group is not as difficult to swallow as it is in the United States. Though some Americans, on learning about Michael Fay's punishment, were keen to achieve lower crime rates by importing similar methods, it is unlikely that they would have been willing to sacrifice their individual freedoms to achieve that goal.



Groupthink According to sociologist Diane Vaughan, the *Challenger* shuttle disaster may have been caused by scientists failing to take seriously weaknesses in the shuttle's design.

may demand absolute conformity and punish those who threaten to undermine the consensus. Although groupthink does help maintain solidarity, it can also short-circuit the decision-making process, letting a desire for unanimity prevail over critical reasoning. When this happens, groups may begin to feel invulnerable and morally superior (White 1989). Members who would otherwise wish to dissent may instead cave in to peer pressure (see the next section).

The problem of groupthink can reach the highest level of industry or government, sometimes with disastrous results. For instance, there are those who believe that the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger* in 1986 may have been a result of NASA scientists' failing to take seriously those who suspected weaknesses in the shuttle's launch design (Vaughan 1996). More recently, groupthink may have been to blame for the failure of the CIA and the White House to accurately assess the state of Saddam Hussein's programs for weapons of mass destruction; the perceived existence of such weapons was a primary rationale for the 2003 Iraq War. A Senate Intelligence Committee report claims that a groupthink dynamic caused those involved to lose objectivity and to embellish or exaggerate findings that justified the U.S. invasion (Ehrenreich 2004; Isikoff 2004).

Social Influence (Peer Pressure)

While you may not have had any personal experience with groupthink, you are certain to find the next set of sociological concepts all too familiar. When individuals are part of groups, they are necessarily influenced by other members. Sociologists refer to this as **social influence**, or **peer pressure**. Knowing how social influence works can help you when you need to convince others to act in a certain way (like agreeing on a specific restaurant or movie). In turn it can also help you to recognize when others are trying to influence you (to drink too much or drive too fast, for example).

The idea of social influence is not new—the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle considered persuasion in his *Rhetoric*. But the more modern studies on social influence date back to World War II, when social scientists were trying to help in the war effort by using motivational films to boost morale among servicemen. Since then, the study of social influence has become an expanding part of the field devoted to discovering the principles that determine our beliefs, create our attitudes, and move us to action (Friedkin and Cook 1990; Cialdini and Trost 1998; Friedkin and Granovetter 1998). Recent research on social influence has revealed that everything from our performance in school (Altermatt and Pomerantz 2005) to the likelihood that we will commit rape (Bohner et al. 2006) can be subject to the influence of others. We will focus here on how social influence functions in everyday situations.

Almost all members of society are susceptible to what is either real or imagined social pressure to conform. In general, we conform because we want to gain acceptance and approval (positive sanctions) and avoid rejection and disapproval (negative sanctions). We follow **prescriptions**, doing the things we're supposed to do, as well as **proscriptions**, avoiding the things we're not supposed to do.

Social psychologists have determined that social influence results in one of three kinds of conformity: compliance, identification, or internalization. **Compliance**, the mildest kind of conformity, means going along with something because you expect to gain rewards or avoid punishments (for example, adhering to a dress code at work or school even if you wish you didn't have to). When people comply, however, they don't actually change their own ideas or beliefs. **Identification**, a somewhat stronger kind of conformity, is induced by a person's desire to establish or maintain a relationship with a person or group (for example, emulating the fashion style of people

social influence (peer pressure) the influence of one's fellow group members on individual attitudes and behaviors

prescriptions behaviors approved of by a particular social group

proscriptions behaviors a particular social group wants its members to avoid

compliance the mildest type of conformity, undertaken to gain rewards or avoid punishments

identification a type of conformity stronger than compliance and weaker than internalization, caused by a desire to establish or maintain a relationship with a person or a group

internalization the strongest type of conformity, occurring when an individual adopts the beliefs or actions of a group and makes them her own

you would like to be friends with). A person who identifies with a group conforms to their wishes and follows their behavior. **Internalization**, the strongest kind of conformity, occurs when an individual adopts the beliefs of a leader or group. An example of internalization would be dressing modestly as required by your religion—because you believe it to be morally right. When internalization occurs, people believe in what they are doing.

Experiments in Conformity

Three rather famous social psychological studies were conducted in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, with the related goal of trying to understand more about the dynamics of social pressure and, in particular, about group conformity and obedience to authority.

THE ASCH EXPERIMENT The first of these experiments was a study on compliance conducted in 1951 by Solomon Asch (1958), who gathered groups of seven or eight students to participate in what he called an experiment on visual perception. In fact, only one of the students in each group was a real research subject; the others knew ahead of time how they were supposed to "act." During the experiment, the participants were asked to look at a set of three straight lines and to match the length of a fourth line to one of the other three (see Figure 6.2). In each case, the real research subjects would be the last to give an answer. At first, all participants gave the same correct answer. After a few rounds, however, the confederates began to give the same consistently wrong answer. They were completely unanimous in perceiving the line lengths incorrectly. How would the real subjects react when it came to their turn?

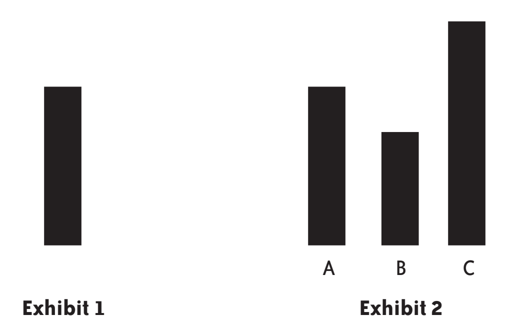


FIGURE 6.2 Which Line in Exhibit 2 Matches Exhibit 1? Solomon Asch's studies showed that some people will go against the evidence of their own senses if others around them seem to have different perceptions.

Most subjects felt considerable pressure to comply with the rest of the group. A third (33 percent) were "yielders" who gave in at least half of the time to what they knew were the wrong answers. Another 40 percent yielded less frequently but still gave some wrong answers. Only 25 percent were "independents," refusing to give in to the majority. In a debriefing period after the experiment, some subjects reported that they had assumed the rest of the participants were right and they were wrong. Other subjects knew they were not wrong but did not want to appear different from the rest of the group. Almost all of them were greatly distressed by the discrepancy between their own perceptions and those of the other participants. Clearly, it can be difficult to resist peer pressure and to maintain independence in a group situation. What would you have done?

THE MILGRAM EXPERIMENT Stanley Milgram's experience as a graduate student of Solomon Asch's led him to further work on conformity. His first experiments were conducted in 1961, just after the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann had begun in Israel. Many of those who were prosecuted in the years after World War II offered the defense that they were "only following orders." But it was not just soldiers who sent millions of innocents to concentration camps—ordinary citizens turned in their neighbors. Milgram wanted to know whether something particular about the German national psyche led so many to act as accomplices to the mass executions, why they complied with authority figures even when orders conflicted with their own consciences. While we usually think that following orders is a good thing, in the case of the Holocaust, it amounted to a "crime of obedience."

The Milgram experiment (1963, 1974) used a laboratory setting to test the lengths to which ordinary people would follow orders from a legitimate authority. The experiment included three roles: the "experimenter" (a scientist in a white lab coat), a "teacher," and a "learner." The teachers were the only real research subjects in the experiment: although the teachers were led to believe otherwise, the learners were actually confederates of the experimenters. When roles were assigned at the outset of the experiment, the research subjects were always picked to play the teacher, despite a seemingly random assignment of roles.

The stated goal of the experiment was to measure the effect of punishment on memory and learning. The teacher was instructed to read aloud a set of word pairs for the learner to memorize. The teacher would then repeat the first word in the pair, and for each incorrect answer, administer a shock of



The Milgram Experiment How did Stanley Milgram test participants' obedience to authority? Do you think he would get the same results today?

increasing voltage to the learner. The teacher watched while the experimenter strapped the learner to a chair and applied electrodes to his arms. The teacher was then directed to an adjoining room where he could communicate with, but not see, the learner. This room contained a machine with a series of levers indicating the increasing levels of voltage that would be administered for each successive incorrect answer. (In actuality, the machine was not connected to the learner, and he received no shocks.)

The experiment began. As the teacher amplified the voltage for each incorrect answer, the learner responded in increasingly vocal ways. In reality, the teacher was hearing a prerecorded tape that included exclamations, banging on the wall, complaints by the learner about a heart condition, and finally, silence. Many subjects grew uncomfortable at around 135 volts, often pausing and expressing a desire to check on the learner or discontinue the experiment. At that point the experimenter would give a succession of orders, prodding the teacher to continue. After being assured that they would not be held responsible, most subjects continued, many reaching the maximum of 450 volts.

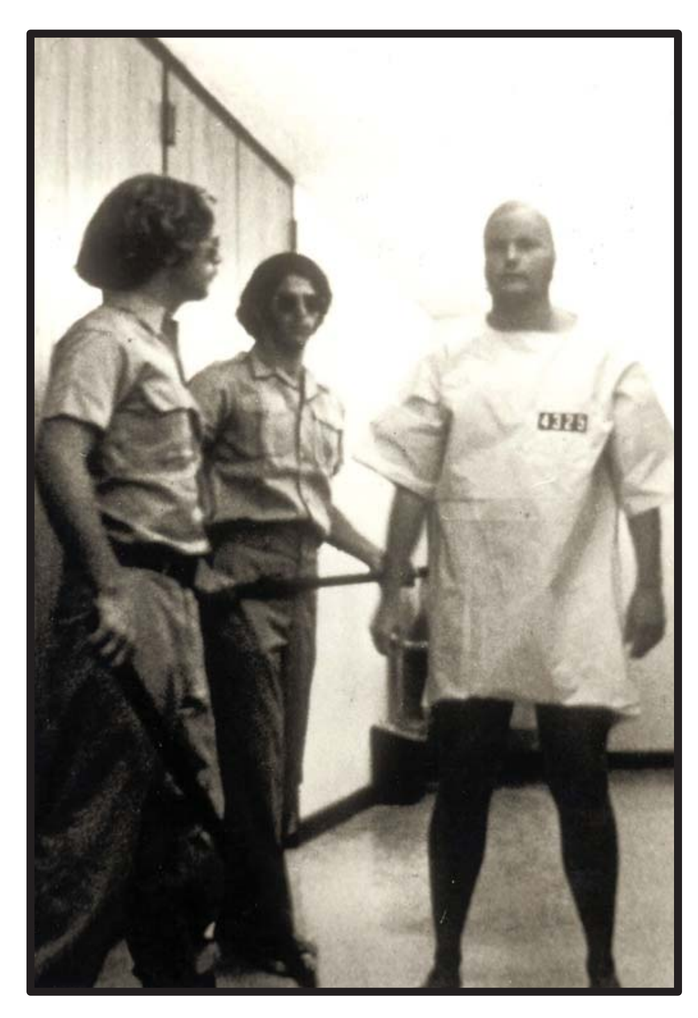
Milgram and his colleagues were stunned by the results. They had believed that only a few of the subjects would be willing to inflict the maximum voltage. In the first set of experiments, 65 percent of the participants administered the maximum voltage, though many were very uncomfortable doing so and all paused at some point. Only one participant outright refused to administer even low-voltage shocks. Milgram's results highlight the dynamics of conformity revealed in the Asch experiment. A subject will often rely on the expertise of an individual or group, in this case the experimenter, when faced with a difficult decision. We also see how thoroughly socialized most people are to obey authority and carry out orders, especially when they no longer consider themselves responsible for their actions. Clearly few people have the personal resources to resist authority, even when it goes against their conscience.

THE STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT The Stanford Prison Experiment, conducted by Milgram's high school classmate Philip Zimbardo (1971), also examined the power of authority. Twenty-four undergraduates deemed psychologically healthy and stable were recruited to participate in a two-week mock prison simulation. Role assignment as prisoner or guard was based on a coin toss. Guards were given batons, khaki clothing, and mirrored sunglasses and were told they could not physically harm the prisoners but could otherwise create feelings of boredom, fear, or powerlessness. Prisoners were "arrested" and taken to a mock "jail" set up in the basement of a university building, where they were strip-searched and dressed in smocks and stocking caps (to simulate shaven heads) and assigned identity numbers. A research assistant played the role of warden, while Zimbardo himself was the superintendent.

The students quickly inhabited their roles, but soon exceeded the experimenters' expectations, resulting in an abusive and potentially dangerous situation. Rioting began by the second day; the guards quelled it harshly, harassing the prisoners and depriving them of food, sleep, and basic sanitation. Several guards became increasingly sadistic as the experiment went on, degrading and punishing any prisoner who challenged their authority, and several prisoners showed signs of psychological trauma. After only six days, Zimbardo was compelled to shut down the experiment after a graduate student (whom he later married) became appalled by the conditions.

The Stanford Prison Experiment provided another example of the way situational dynamics, rather than individuals' personal attributes, can determine behavior. Both this and the Milgram experiment would be considered unethical by today's standards and would violate the codes of ethics since established by professional organizations.

Some researchers have claimed that the Asch experiment was a "child of its time," that students in the 1950s were more obedient in their roles and the culture placed greater emphasis on the value of conformity (Perrin and Spencer 1980, 1981). The same could be argued about Milgram and Zimbardo's experiments. Researchers in recent decades who have replicated the Asch experiment have in fact seen significantly lower rates of compliance, suggesting that the



The Stanford Prison Experiment Why do you think the students in Zimbardo's experiment inhabited their roles so completely? What does it reveal about group behavior?

historical and cultural context in which the experiment was conducted seemed to have an effect on how subjects performed (Bond and Sussex 1996). This conclusion echoes some of Ralph Turner's findings about the institutional or impulsive self, discussed in an earlier Data Workshop: namely, he found that patterns of behavior can change over time and that separate generations may respond differently to social pressures.

Yet the power of the group continues to interest sociologists, psychologists, and others who want to understand what drives our powerful impulse to comply (Cialdini 1998). The experiments remain relevant because real-life examples of obedience continue to occur—whether in the case of the prison guards at Abu Ghraib or in a serial telephone hoax perpetrated on fast food workers in which a caller posing as a police officer instructed assistant managers to abuse fellow workers (Wolfson 2005).

social loafing the phenomenon in which as more individuals are added to a task, each individual contributes a little less; a source of ineffacy when working in teams

Teamwork

Are two heads better than one? Or do too many cooks spoil the broth? Early research on groups (Homans 1951) typically assumed that it was always more productive to work in a team rather than alone. However, researchers soon recognized that both the nature of the task and the characteristics of the group have a lot to do with the comparative advantage or disadvantage of working in a group (Goodacre 1953). When we measure productivity, groups almost always outperform single individuals. Things get a bit more complicated, however, when groups are compared with the same number of people working by themselves.

In one of the earliest attempts to systematically study group productivity, experimental social psychologist Ivan Steiner (1972) compared the potential productivity of a group (what they should be able to do) with their actual productivity (what they in fact got done). According to Steiner, actual group productivity can never equal potential productivity because there will always be losses in the team process. Two major sources of inefficiency in particular come with the group process, and both get worse as group size increases. One source is organization: coordinating activities and delegating tasks. For example, if four friends are going to help you move to a new apartment, some time will be lost while you figure out who should pack what, how the furniture will be arranged in the truck, where the boxes should go in the new apartment, and so forth.

Another source of inefficiency is the phenomenon known as **social loafing**, which means that as more individuals are added to a task, each one takes it a little easier (Karau and Williams 1993). Furthermore, as more people become involved, the harder it will be to discern individual effort. If it is impossible for any single person to receive credit or blame, motivation usually suffers. Have you ever asked too many people to help you move to a new apartment? If so, chances are a few did most of the work, some showed up late and helped out a bit, and others did very little but had a good time talking and eating pizza. Having too many "helpers" may contribute to social loafing.

Solutions to the problem of social loafing include recognizing individual effort and finding ways to make a task more interesting or personally rewarding, but such solutions are not always possible. It might be difficult, for instance,

On the Job

Teamwork and the Tour de France

In 2005, American Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France for the seventh straight time. The cyclist has earned a hero's reputation for his preeminence in a race usually dominated by Europeans and furthermore racked up his wins after surviving advanced testicular cancer. Clearly, Armstrong is a man of unusual perseverance, courage, and physical endurance. In the news media, he is presented as someone whose heroic individual qualities have made his athletic prowess possible—and indeed they have. But the Tour de France is, after all, a team event.

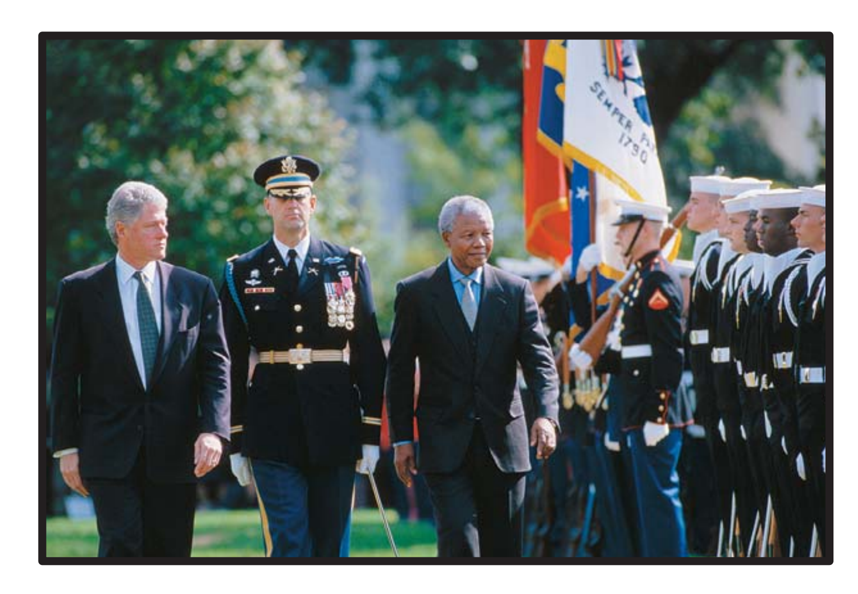
Armstrong's all-important teammates for the 2005 race included eight other men that you have probably never heard of: José Azevedo, Yaroslav Popovych, Benjamin Noval Gonzalez, George Hincapie, Paolo Savoldelli, Manuel Beltran Martinez, Pavel Padrnos, and José L. Rubiera Vigil. In the Tour de France, a race lasting over three weeks and covering more than 2,000 miles, each team member has a particular specialty, and each stage of the race requires a different strategy. Sprinters may be needed to make a "breakaway" early in the race; "super-climbers" are necessary in the mountainous regions; and sometimes the entire team has to protect the team leader, "blocking" and "drafting" in order to save energy. Teamwork is required to organize bathroom and food breaks, as the race stops for no man. Extremely consistent riders (*rouleurs*) are prized, as are those who ride with aggressiveness and bravery (*combativité*). When the individual winner crosses the finish line on the Champs-Elysées in Paris, it is the sacrifices of his altruistic teammates that have made his win possible.

In the years since 2005, the Tour de France has seen its share of scandal—American Floyd Landis's 2006 victory was stripped from him when tests showed he had used banned substances during the race. Other riders, including favorites Jan Ullrich and Ivan Basso, have also been banned from the Tour due to doping allegations. However, the Tour remains an event in which premier athletes compete in complex teamwork relations to push the limits of human achievement.

Which position will you find yourself in when you enter the workplace? Will you be the team leader, whose individual successes depend on the contributions of others? Or will you be the team member, whose special skills support the achievements of the group? It is likely that you will find yourself in both situations over the course of your working life. So remember, when you don the *maillot jaune* (the yellow jersey worn by the Tour de France leader), that in most cases it takes a team effort to get you to the winner's circle.



to make "moving day" more rewarding. Another solution, however, is suggested by **social identity theory**. Having a social identity, as opposed to a personal one, involves thinking and feeling like a representative of a group (R. Turner 1987); you have a real desire to belong to, not simply keep company with, the group. According to this model the most efficient teams are characterized by the greatest social identity among their members; such social identity increases motivation and places the needs of the group above purely personal concerns.



Qualities of Leadership Leaders like Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela possess both legal-rational and charismatic authority.

Qualities of Leadership: Power, Authority, and Style

Effective group leaders possess a variety of qualities, some of which are particular to the kind of group they lead. The leader of a therapeutic support group, for example, needs the proper credentials as well as experience and compassion for his patients. The captain of a sports team must display expertise at her game as well as the ability to inspire her teammates. An office manager must be well organized and good at dealing with different kinds of people. A police commander must be in good physical shape, skilled in law enforcement tactics, and quick-thinking in a crisis.

One thing almost all leaders have in common, though, is **power**—the ability to control the actions of others. Whether it is **coercive power** (backed by the threat of force) or merely **influential power** (supported by persuasion), leadership involves getting people to do things they may or may not want to do. For example, a football coach might wield both coercive and influential power over his players. Although the athletes would definitely want to win games, they might not want to run their training drills every day. During a workout, team members might respond to either the threat of being kicked off the team or the encouragement they receive from the coach. Power, in whatever form it takes, is both a privilege and a requirement of leadership.

Since leadership requires the exercise of power, most formal organizations have institutionalized it in some officially recognized form of **authority**. Max Weber (1913/1962) identified three different types of authority that may be found in social organizations. **Traditional authority**, based in custom, birthright, or divine right, is usually associated with monarchies and dynasties. Kings and queens inherit the throne, not only through lineage but also by divine appointment, meaning by higher authority. Their personal qualities don't really matter, and they can't be replaced by legal proceedings. **Legal-rational authority**, on the other hand, is based in laws and rules, not in the lineage of any individual leader. Modern presidencies and parliaments are built on this kind of authority. The third type, **charismatic authority**, is based in the remarkable personal qualities of the leader her- or himself. Neither rules nor traditions are necessary for the establishment of a charismatic leader—indeed, the leader can be a revolutionary, breaking rules and defying traditions. This is perhaps the only place we will ever find Jesus Christ and Adolf Hitler in the same category: both were extremely charismatic leaders.

The three types of authority are not necessarily mutually exclusive—they can coexist within the same leader. Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan were appealing and charismatic

social identity theory a theory of group formation and maintenance that stresses the need of individual members to feel a sense of belonging

power the ability to control the actions of others

coercive power power that is backed by the threat of force

influential power power that is supported by persuasion

authority the legitimate right to wield power

traditional authority authority based in custom, birthright, or divine right

legal-rational authority authority based in laws, rules, and procedures, not in the heredity or personality of any individual leader

charismatic authority authority based in the perception of remarkable personal qualities in a leader

leaders within the context of the legal-rational authority of the presidency; the Kennedy family is considered an American political dynasty of sorts, following a tradition of leadership within the structure of electoral politics. The late King Hussein of Jordan was revered for his extraordinary charisma and statesmanship despite his traumatic ascent to the throne: as a teenager, he witnessed his grandfather's assassination and, as his heir, was crowned less than a year later. For people like Bill Clinton (a legal-rational ruler) and King Hussein (a traditional ruler), their charisma was not necessarily the root of their authority, but it did play a part in their ability to rule.

In addition to different types of power and authority, group leaders may exhibit different personal leadership styles as well. Some are more **instrumental**—that is, they are task or goal oriented—while others are more **expressive**, or concerned with maintaining harmony within the group (Parsons and Bales 1955). An instrumental leader is less concerned with people's feelings than with getting the job done, whereas an expressive leader conveys interest in group members' emotions as well as their achievements. We often consider leadership styles through the lens of gender, expecting men to be more instrumental and women to be more expressive. In fact, we sometimes feel surprised or upset when these gendered expectations aren't met: a male leader with a more expressive style (like former California governor Jerry Brown, nicknamed "Moonbeam" for his emotive, touchy-feely style) is sometimes seen as weak, while a female leader with a more instrumental style (such as U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, whose ambition and drive earned her criticism both while her husband was in the White House and while she was campaigning herself in 2008) is sometimes seen as pushy.

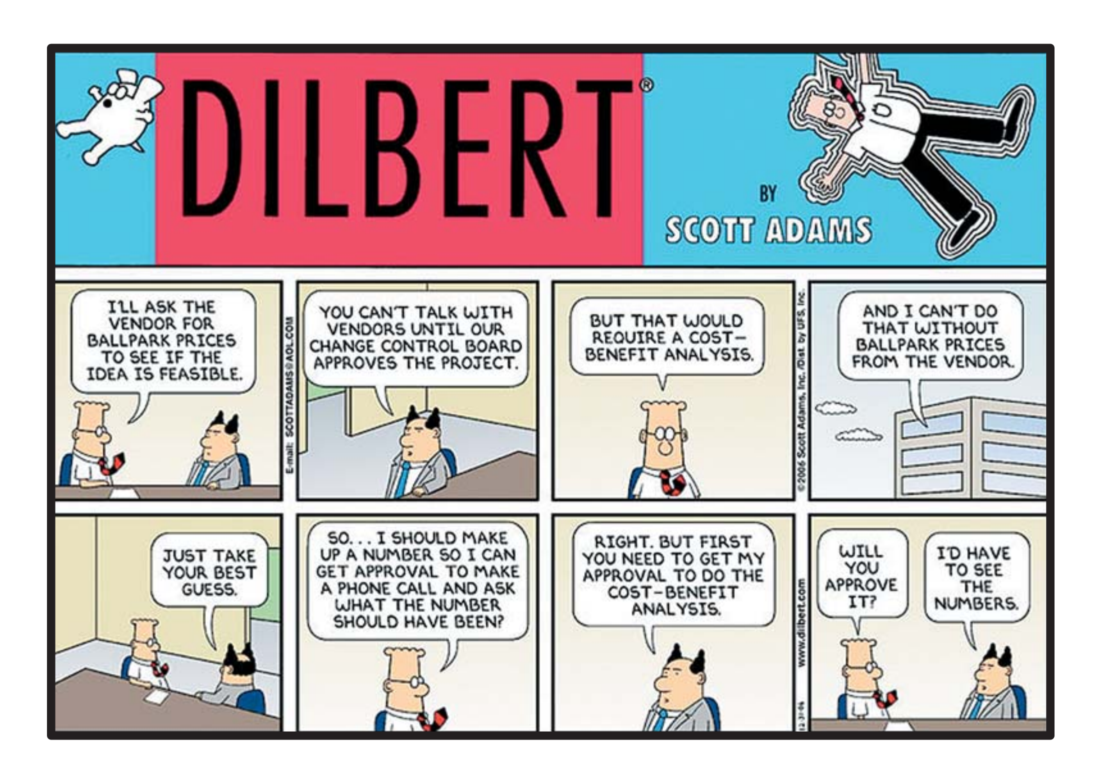
instrumental leadership leadership that is task or goal oriented

expressive leadership leadership concerned with maintaining emotional and relational harmony within the group

bureaucracy a type of secondary group designed to perform tasks efficiently, characterized by specialization, technical competence, hierarchy, written rules, impersonality, and formal written communication

Bureaucracy

Examples of **bureaucracies**, a specific type of secondary group, are everywhere in your life—your university, employer, internet service provider, fast-food restaurant, and even church are likely to be organized bureaucratically. Bureaucracies are designed to perform tasks efficiently, and they approach their tasks, whatever they are, with calculations designed deliberately to meet their goals.



Bureaucracies Are Everywhere Bureaucratic regulations are supposed to make organizations run smoothly; however, bureaucracy can also be impersonal, inflexible, and hyperrational.

Bureaucracies have certain organizational traits, which help them operate efficiently. Max Weber identified these characteristics in 1921 (1921/1968):

1. Specialization: All members of a bureaucracy are assigned specialized roles and tasks.
2. Technical competence: Bureaucratic members are specially trained for their specific roles.
3. Hierarchy: Bureaucracies always feature the supervision of subordinates by higher-ranking managers and bosses.
4. Rules and regulations: These are meant to make all operations as predictable as possible.
5. Impersonality: In a bureaucracy, rules come before people; no individual receives special treatment.
6. Formal written communication: Documents such as memos (or e-mails) are the heart of the organization and the most effective way to communicate.

You can see these traits in action at your own college or university. Take specialization and technical competence, for instance. Virtually none of your professors could teach another's classes: your sociology professor would likely be completely useless in a chemistry lab, a math classroom, or even an English seminar. The groundskeepers, campus police officers, soccer coaches, and librarians are all specially qualified to do their own jobs and no one else's. In addition, there are layers of hierarchy at a university, from the trustees and president to the vice chancellors, provosts, deans, and department chairs. Professors are, in some ways, at the bottom of the academic hierarchy (except for you, the students)! And every other campus unit (athletics, residence life, food service, facilities maintenance) has its own hierarchy as well.

Regulations keep a university running smoothly—or at least that's what they are meant to do. Undoubtedly, though, you have run up against a regulation that kept you from doing something you really wanted to do—add a class after a deadline, move into a campus apartment. This is where the feature of impersonality also comes into play: the rules of the bureaucracy trumped your individual needs, no matter how deserving you thought you were. This is especially true at larger universities; at small schools, special treatment is still sometimes possible. But big bureaucracies often treat you "like a number"—and in fact, you *are* a number to your college, as your student ID number is the first thing you are issued on arrival.

rationalization the application of economic logic to human activity; the use of formal rules and regulations in order to maximize efficiency without consideration of subjective or individual concerns

McDonaldization George Ritzer's term describing the spread of bureaucratic rationalization and the accompanying increases in efficiency and dehumanization

The McDonaldization of Society

Weber's model of bureaucracy seems cold and heartless, alienating and impersonal, rule-bound, inflexible, and undemocratic. Indeed, many bureaucracies *are* like this—they are highly efficient secondary groups that operate on the principle of **rationalization**, in which rules and regulations are paramount and an individual's unique personal qualities are unimportant. Worse yet, some of the hyperrationalized features of successful bureaucracies are trickling down into other areas of our everyday lives.

Sociologist George Ritzer (1996) called this trickle-down rationalization process **McDonaldization**. We touch-tone our way through telephone calls at work, never speaking to a real person; at lunch, we construct our own salads at the salad bar and bus our own tables afterward; at the bank, we no longer interact with human tellers but rather drive through the ATM on the way home, where we microwave our dinners and watch increasingly predictable sitcoms or movie sequels on TV. Ritzer is critical of the dehumanizing aspects of McDonaldization and hopes that increased awareness of the process will help us avoid the "iron cage" of bureaucracy (a term coined by Weber to illustrate the way bureaucracies can trap individuals).

Sociologist Robin Leidner delves further into the McDonaldization phenomenon in her book *Fast Food, Fast Talk* (1993). Through fieldwork in actual McDonald's franchises, Leidner developed a model for understanding the increasing routinization of service industries, in this case the ubiquitous fast-food restaurant. In particular, she looks at how standardized "scripts" for interaction help to shape customers' experiences. The physical atmosphere of a McDonald's is not conducive to hanging out (unlike, say, a café); customers don't expect to sit down and be waited on. Rather, they respond to expectations that they will enter, order food from a predetermined menu and pay for it, eat quickly, deposit trash in the receptacles, and then leave. Leidner exposes these processes of routinization by looking at what happens when breakdowns occur in these expectations.

For example, Leidner notes that McDonald's trains workers to refer to customers as "guests," reinforcing the obligation to serve them respectfully even if that respect is not reciprocated. Leidner observed that if customers were angry or uncooperative, workers tried even harder to serve them swiftly so that they would leave faster and have less time to make trouble in the restaurant. Workers developed a mindset

that allowed them to handle problem customers in a way that minimized trouble and facilitated their routinized work.

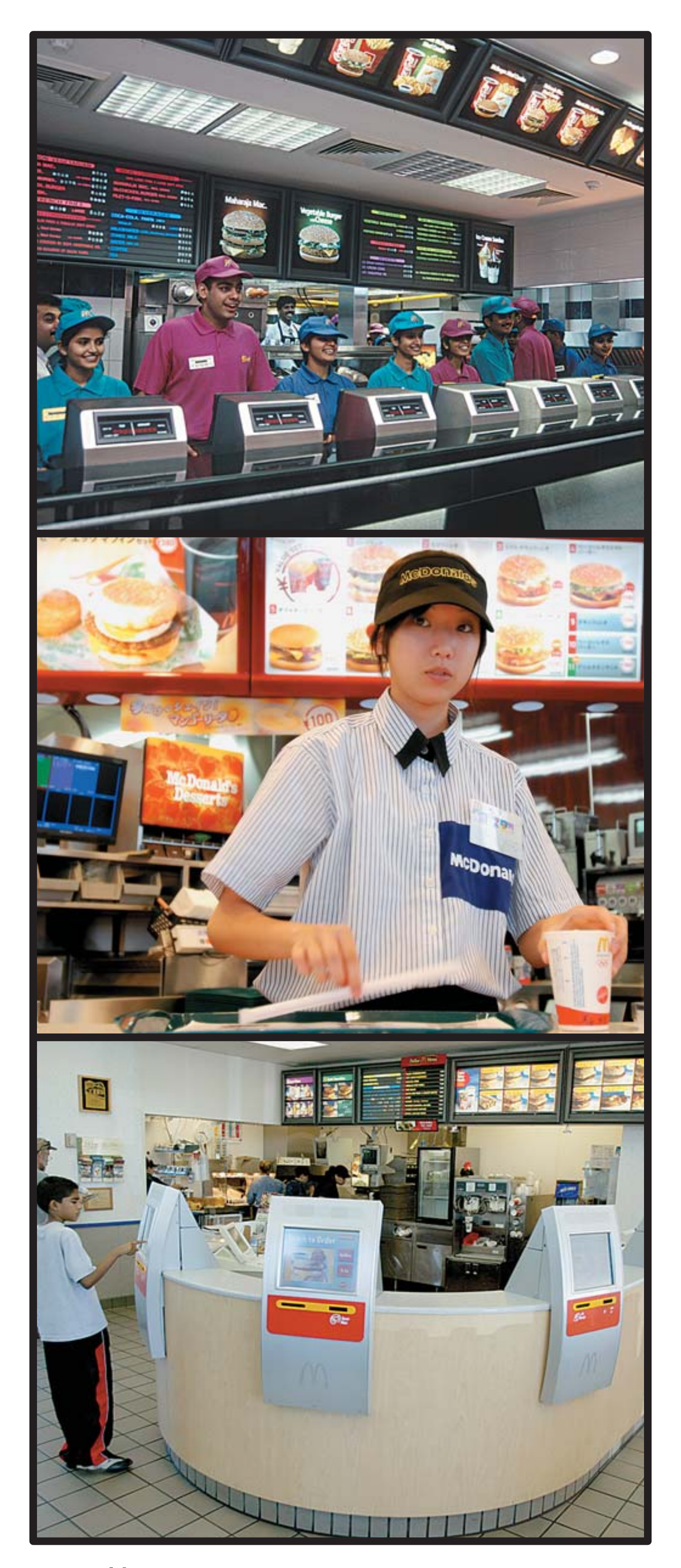
Responding to Bureaucratic Constraints

Not everything about bureaucracies is bad. In fact, in contemporary, postindustrial society, just about everything you need or want is created, produced, distributed, and serviced by a bureaucracy. The water in the tap, the lights, the streets, the car and its insurance, the food on the table, the table itself, the clothes on your back, the movies, songs, and books you enjoy—all are the products of bureaucratic organizations. As problematic as they are, we can't live without them. So how can we benefit from our contact with bureaucracies without being controlled by them?

For one thing, even the most overrationalized, McDonaldized bureaucracy is populated by people who are capable of forming primary group relationships as well, who might celebrate birthdays, throw parties, and go out for drinks after work. Indeed, interpersonal interactions help humanize bureaucracies. Further, in forward-thinking organizations, new management strategies meant to address alienation and disenchantment are being implemented. Yes, bureaucracies still seek to be as efficient and predictable as possible in their daily operations. But some, like Starbucks, UPS, and Apple Computers, are trying to play up their human side as well—becoming "enlightened" bureaucracies by being inclusive, sharing responsibility, and providing opportunities for all to advance.

Businesses have also begun organizing corporate retreats to teach managers how to understand individual strengths and weaknesses, support individual skills and talents, and encourage teamwork, trust, and leadership. Some, like Fidelity Financial, Toyota, and Pella Windows, have adopted the Japanese management technique called *kaizen*, in which lower-level workers are encouraged to suggest new, innovative ways to improve the organization and upper-level managers are required to actually put these ideas into practice, rewarding individual creativity and benefiting the company at the same time (Pollack 1999; Hakim 2001). Make no mistake—corporations are not sacrificing the bottom line for the good of an individual. But often they are finding that the needs of the individual and those of the organization are not mutually exclusive.

FRONTIER HOUSE If you've ever had doubts about the benefits bureaucracies can bring, you might try renting the DVDs of the PBS television series *Frontier House* (2002). In this series, three twenty-first-century families struggled to



McDonaldization In her ethnography *Fast Food, Fast Talk*, Robin Leidner studied how the routinization of services and physical atmosphere at McDonald's restaurants standardized the types of interactions occurring there.

Changing the World

The Catholic Worker Movement: Rejecting Bureaucracy, Providing Respite

What would you do if you believed that your own government's bureaucracies were wrong or unjust? That they had created a society that could not care for its own members, that exported violence by making war abroad, that excluded the sick and the marginal, and that was in desperate need of change? You might write a letter to your congressperson, or vote for a third-party candidate, or maybe even run for office yourself. These options assume that bureaucracies can be repaired if they appear to be broken. But some people do not make that assumption and reject such forms of social organization altogether. If you are one of those people, you might be interested to learn about the Catholic Worker Movement.

The movement was founded in New York City in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. Day was a journalist, anarchist, and single mother, Maurin a member of the Catholic Christian Brothers community. In those days of the Great Depression, Day and Maurin saw people out of work, out of money, out of food, with nowhere to turn. In response, they began publishing a newspaper that articulated their belief in the dignity of every human being, called *The Catholic Worker* (it's still in circulation today). They also founded a "house of hospitality" for the poor and dispossessed. Since then, a loose alliance of groups in about half the states and countries such as Canada, England, Germany, and Sweden have established almost 150 Catholic Worker Houses, usually in poor or blighted neighborhoods.

Each house provides shelter, meals, clothing, and support for the poor and the homeless and anyone else who has fallen through the cracks of such agencies as the social services, criminal justice, and mental health systems. Some houses help their guests find jobs and housing on their own. Guests are usually expected to contribute to the house by doing chores like gardening, repairs, or cooking.

Catholic Worker Houses are staffed by long-term volunteers who live communally in intensive service and intentional poverty. They believe that committed personal action is the only authentic response to the poverty and suffering created by our current government structure. In fact, they reject most forms of bureaucratic authority, including that of the Catholic Church (which Day and Maurin believed had become too political and too far removed from its original spiritual mission to the poor) and the federal government. The Catholic Worker organization itself has no central governing board and no national headquarters. Every house is self-governing, by the consensus of its volunteers.



Dorothy Day (1897–1980)
"Our problems stem from our acceptance of this filthy, rotten system."

As a result of their beliefs, workers have sometimes run afoul of the government. In 2005, the St. Peter Claver Catholic Worker House in South Bend, Indiana, was found in violation of a zoning ordinance by having more than three unrelated people living in the house. The neighbors had complained that they didn't want a "homeless shelter" in the neighborhood and brought the violation to the attention of the city council. The Catholic Workers argued that their presence actually reduced homelessness in the neighborhood by providing sanctuary for many who would otherwise be on the streets, but they were ultimately forced to move to a new house in a nearby neighborhood that was, according to the city bureaucracy, "properly" zoned.

Participants in the Catholic Worker Movement make great personal sacrifices to provide aid and comfort to those they believe our government neglects. They offer alternatives that support and sustain those who suffer as a result of the flaws in our bureaucracies—one person and one communally governed house at a time.



The Upside of Bureaucracies Television shows like *Frontier House* remind us that conditions were frequently grueling and harsh before the rationalizing influence of bureaucracies.

survive on 1883-style Montana homesteads—with no supermarkets, no Gap stores or Starbucks, no real estate developers or gas stations or power companies. These folks had to do for themselves what bureaucratic organizations do for us on a daily basis: they built their own homes, grew their own food, killed their own chickens, sewed their own clothes, and chopped their own firewood. They learned a great deal, but the conditions were grueling and the hardships severe. All were glad to get back to "civilization" after six months—back to running water, prepackaged foods, and light and heat at the flip of a switch. In other words, back to a life made efficient, easy, and predictable by bureaucratic principles.

LOCAVORES Ever wonder where your food comes from or how long it had to travel before landing on your supermarket shelf? There's a growing group of people who want to make sure their food sources are local. They're known as *locavores*—local eaters—and their goal is to avoid corporate, bureaucratic food sources (like supermarket chains and multinational food processors and manufacturers). Locavores give up a certain amount of convenience in order to support independent, sustainable local farmers and food producers, and many even grow and process their own foods. One dedicated locavore is Lenae Weichel, who in 2008 embarked upon a year-long campaign to feed her family from sources available within a 100-mile radius of her home in Rockford, Illinois (read her story at www.eatnearrockford.blogspot.com). During the summer, she shopped at farmer's markets and tended her own massive vegetable garden, canning and "putting up" produce for winter storage. She sought out local meat sources (mostly goats from a nearby herd) and visited regional chicken farmers for eggs. She milled her own oat flour, since virtually no wheat is grown in Illinois, and she even took up beekeeping so that her family could enjoy the sweetness of honey (no sugar is produced within their local area). Weichel's family had to give up some staples, such as oranges and bananas, and did allow some products that were technically in violation of their 100-mile rule such as chocolate and cooking oil, as well as coffee, tea, and spices. Locavore experiments like Weichel's are an awful lot of work and can seem inconvenient and unpleasant depending on where one lives and what one has to give up. But many, including Weichel, feel it's worth it to eat fresh, healthy, seasonal food, support community farms, and stand up to the "Big Food" bureaucracies that bring us such treats as overprocessed frozen foods and rock-hard pink tomatoes.

BURNING MAN In the barren Black Rock Desert of Nevada, some people actively seek out an escape from their bureaucratically regimented life, at least for one week every



Burning Man Finale Each year thousands of "burners" gather in the Black Rock Desert to celebrate the rejection of values like conformity, bureaucracy, and capitalism.

summer, at a festival called Burning Man (Sonner 2002; Chen 2004). The festival, begun in 1990 on a beach near San Francisco with just 20 participants, now draws almost 40,000 people each year. Burning Man is hard to describe for those who have never attended. It is a freewheeling experiment in temporary community, where there are no rules except to protect the well-being of participants ("burners") and where everyone gathers together to celebrate various forms of self-expression and self-reliance not normally encountered in everyday life.

Burning Man attracts a wide variety of individuals from different backgrounds (though it may be difficult to tell beneath the body paint, mud, or costumes that many wear), most of them in their 20s and 30s. Unlike many places in the real world, participants are encouraged to interact with each other; there are no strangers at "the Burn." Each year is characterized by a different theme—like "Beyond Belief" in 2003, "Psyche" in 2005, and "American Dream" in 2008—and participants are invited to contribute in some meaningful way to its realization, most often artistically.

Much of what is appealing about Burning Man is that it challenges many of the norms and values of mainstream society, especially those that are associated with conformity, bureaucracy, and capitalism. Black Rock resembles a city when the thousands of participants converge there, but one comprised of tents and RVs gathered into neighborhoods with names like "Tic Toc Town" and "Capitalist Pig Camp" (Doherty 2000). The city has its own informal economy as well. Once an admission fee is paid, money is no longer used. Participants must bring enough supplies to support themselves

TABLE 6.1 ***Theory in Everyday Life***

Perspective	Approach to Groups	Case Study: Fraternities
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Life in groups helps to regulate and give meaning to individual experience, contributing to social cohesion and stability.	Affiliation groups like fraternities help create social cohesion in the context of a larger, possibly alienating, university system by bringing young men with shared values together.
CONFLICT THEORY	Group membership is often the basis for the distribution of rewards, privileges and opportunities in our society. An individual may be treated preferentially or prejudicially based on his or her group membership .	In-group and out-group dynamics can contribute to stereotyping and conflict as fraternity brothers develop an "us vs. them" perspective regarding other frats and non-Greeks.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Group norms, values, and dynamics are generated situationally, in interaction with other members.	The pressure to conform to group culture (as in the cases of peer pressure and groupthink) can lead individuals to do things they might never do alone, and can have negative consequences, as in the case of fraternity hazing and binge drinking. It can also lead to positive actions, such as when fraternity members volunteer or raise money for charity.

or use alternate forms of currency such as barter, trade, gifts, or services. Corporate sponsorship is strictly avoided, and logos of any kind are banned.

On the last night of the festival, the giant wooden structure known as the Burning Man is lit on fire, and the celebrants discover their own personal epiphanies as they watch it burn. When the festival is over, participants are committed to leaving no trace behind; the desert is returned to its pristine condition. One burner called the festival "authentic life" with the other days of the year "a tasteless mirage, a pacific struggle against the backwardness of middle America—consumer culture, bad politics, *Fear Factor* and fear thy neighbour" (Babiak 2004). So while Burning Man participants don't abandon permanently the web of contemporary bureaucracies that shape their lives, they gain some relief by ditching it all once a year, just for a few days.

Closing Comments

Groups make our lives possible by providing us with the necessities of our existence—food, clothes, cars, homes, and all the other things we use on a daily basis. Groups make our lives enjoyable by providing us with companionship and recreation—from our friends and families to the entertainment conglomerates that produce our favorite music and films. Groups also make our lives problematic—bureaucracies can squelch our individuality, major manufacturers can create social and environmental problems, and some organizations can engender conflict and prejudice between groups. We are at our best in groups, and our worst. We can do great things together, and horrible things. Sociology helps us understand group life at both extremes and everywhere in between.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **What Is a Group?** Unlike crowds, members of a group have something in common, consider this shared attribute meaningful, and interact with each other. We can further classify groups based on the type of interaction they provide. Primary groups provide intimate face-to-face interaction and are most responsible for our emotional satisfaction and socialization. Secondary groups are much larger and more likely to be organized around a specific goal, and so our interactions with them are more likely to be more formal and impersonal.
- **Social Networks** Social network theory provides a vocabulary for understanding how groups form and how they work. Each individual is the center of his or her own social network, a web of direct and indirect links to other social actors. While it may be obvious that who you know is important, research on social networks has shown that indirect ties can be equally important—so it's not just who you know, but who they know.
- **Anomie** Social groups provide the values, norms, and rules that guide our lives. Sociologists like Emile Durkheim and Robert Putnam have worried that in the modern world we have become increasingly disconnected from our groups and more likely to suffer from anomie, or normlessness. However, some critics believe that these worries are overstated and that new technologies like the internet allow us to connect with others in new ways.
- **Group Dynamics** One reason sociologists study groups is to understand group dynamics, the ways in which groups form and fall apart, and the ways they influence their members. Dyads, triads, and other small groups facilitate intimate, intense interactions, but they are also relatively unstable, as even one person leaving can break them up. As groups grow they become more stable at the cost of intimacy. When groups reach a certain size it may be impossible for everyone to interact. Such groups often develop formal rules and regulations. However, even large, formal groups may command intense loyalty.
- Defining group memberships in terms of in-groups and out-groups may enhance the feeling of belonging that group members enjoy. Distinctions between groups increase group cohesion, which ensures the survival of the group but can also lead to intolerance and groupthink. Reference groups provide a standard against which to measure our performance.
- **Social Influence** Almost everyone is influenced by fellow group members. Generally, we conform to group norms and expectations because we crave acceptance

and fear rejection. Social influence can produce different types of conformity depending on the strength of the individual's commitment to the group. Social psychological experiments have shown the power of the group to induce conformity and the extent to which individuals are socialized to obey authority, even when orders conflict with their own sense of morality.

- **Teamwork** Sociologists have studied teamwork to determine whether groups are more efficient than individuals. A group almost always outperforms an individual but rarely performs as well as it could in theory. A group's efficiency usually declines as its size increases, because organizing takes time and social loafing increases with group size. Group leaders can increase efficiency by recognizing individual effort or by increasing members' social identity, the degree to which they identify with the group.
- **Types of Leadership** Leaders can be classified in terms of the type of power they possess (coercive or influential) and according to their leadership style (instrumental or expressive). Alternately, leaders can be understood by looking at the basis for their authority. Max Weber identified three types: traditional, legal-rational, and charismatic. Rational-legal authority is the most common type in modern societies and is associated with bureaucracies: highly efficient secondary groups that operate on the principle of rationalization.
- **Bureaucracy** Max Weber identified six characteristics of bureaucracy: specialization, technical competence, hierarchy, formal regulations, impersonality, and formal written communication. Although bureaucracies often seem heartless and undemocratic, they are extremely efficient and are responsible for providing many basic necessities. However, many sociologists are concerned about the spread of bureaucracy and rationalization throughout society.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Sociologists have found that even indirect ties within our social networks can be very helpful, especially economically. Describe a time when you've gained some material benefit from your social network. Job hunting is the obvious example, but there are many other ways that you might have used indirect ties to your advantage.
2. Many sociologists worry about the anomie that may result from declining membership in groups. Are you a member of any formal organizations, or do you take part in any regular group activities? Alternatively, do you belong to any electronic communities like Friendster, MySpace, Facebook, or others? Which type of group influences you more?
3. Think of at least three groups to which you belong. Which out-groups are associated with these group identities?
4. Which groups serve as your reference groups? Are you a member of all your reference groups? How do these reference groups affect your self-image?
5. The text identifies three different types of conformity: compliance, identification, and internalization. Describe some moments when you've exhibited each type of conformity.
6. One way to decrease the incidence of social loafing is to recruit members with a strong sense of group identity. Do any of your group memberships involve a particularly strong or weak social identity?
7. Legal-rational authority is by far the most common type of authority in modern society, but older forms still exist. Can you think of a contemporary authority figure whose power was granted on the basis of tradition or custom? How about a charismatic authority figure?
8. What are some institutions that you encounter in your everyday life that don't fit Max Weber's description of a bureaucracy?
9. Theorist George Ritzer believes that McDonaldization, the spread of the organizational principles of bureaucracies to all areas of life, is a growing concern. Thinking about Weber's six characteristics of bureaucracies, can you identify areas of your life that have been McDonaldized?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Doherty, Brian. 2004. *This Is Burning Man*. New York: Little, Brown and Company. A portrait of this annual desert festival from an insider's viewpoint. Into what sort of group would you classify Burning Man participants?

FitzGerald, Frances. 1986. *Cities on a Hill*. New York: Simon & Schuster. A journalistic account of four groups with radically different ideologies and lifestyles: San Francisco's mainly gay Castro neighborhood, Jerry Falwell's Liberty Baptist Church, a Florida retirement community, and an Oregon commune. FitzGerald presents them as quintessentially American examples of the power of group life to stimulate individual and social change.

Groupthink. 1992. CRM Learning. Examines the Space Shuttle *Challenger* prelaunch conference and other historical events in which decisions based on groupthink led to disaster. See www.groupthinkfilm.com for more information.

Hausbeck, Kathryn, and Barbara Brent. 2006. "McDonaldization of the Sex Industries: The Business of Sex" in *McDonaldization: The Reader*. Ed. George Ritzer. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. This essay shows just how pervasive the process of rationalization has become.

Heller, Joseph. 1955. *Catch-22*. New York: Simon & Schuster. The term "catch-22" has come to mean a no-win situation, especially one in which a bureaucracy has created rules and regulations so complicated that they create self-contradictory situations. Pay attention to how bureaucracies work (or fail) in this satirical novel.

Klaw, Spencer. 1994. *Without Sin: The Life and Death of the Oneida Community*. New York: Penguin. The Oneida colony was a utopian socialist experiment in cooperative living that rejected monogamy and supported itself through the manufacture of silverware. Much like the participants at Burning Man, they attempted to escape the constraints of a bureaucratically regimented life.

Kreuter, Holly. 2002. *Drama in the Desert: The Sights and Sounds of Burning Man*. San Francisco: Raised Barn Press. Captures the spirit of this vibrant community through color photographs and contributions from group members.

Obedience (1962). A documentary film of Milgram's classic experiment on authority, shot at Yale University.

Quadrophenia. 1979. Dir. Franc Roddam. The Who Films. This rock opera was composed, performed, recorded, and translated onto film by The Who. Set in London in 1964, it addresses the role of group subcultures in the lives of working-class youth by examining the clashes between Mods and Rockers. These groups give the young protagonists a sense of belonging and identity—however, group boundaries also drive individuals apart and lead to violence.

Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment (1991). A documentary film featuring the college students who participated in the now-famous (and unethical) experiment conducted in the basement of the Stanford psychology building.

"We Do What We're Told (Milgram's 37)." This song, written by Peter Gabriel, was inspired by the Milgram experiment.

Wilson, James Q. 2000. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. New York: Basic Books. A helpful explanation of bureaucratic behavior, especially the relationship between a government organization's structure and its specific goals.

Zwick, Mark, and Louise Zwick. 2005. *The Catholic Worker Movement: Intellectual and Spiritual Origins*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press. Describes the social and cultural context of the Catholic Workers Movement and the resources that Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day drew upon in order to resist the claims of bureaucracy and modern authority.

Whenever you get the opportunity, even if it's long after you take this class, visit any of the following museums dedicated to different cultural groups in American life—or visit a similar museum in your home town.

National Museum of the American Indian
Washington, DC
www.nmai.si.edu

Simon Weisenthal Center Museum of Tolerance
Los Angeles, CA
www.museumoftolerance.com

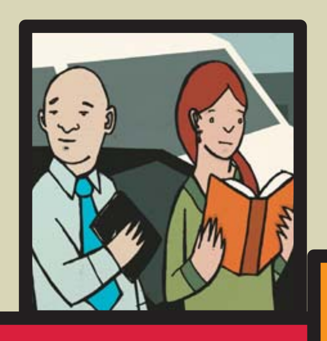
The African American Museum
Philadelphia, PA
www.aampmuseum.org

Arab American National Museum
Dearborn, MI
www.arabamericanmuseum.org

American Swedish Institute
Minneapolis, MN
www.americanswedishinst.org

Museo de las Americas
Denver, CO
www.museo.org

Chinese Historical Society of America
San Francisco, CA
www.chsa.org



CHAPTER 7

Deviance

Despite a great deal of confusion on the morning of September 11, 2001, the facts were fairly quickly established. Nineteen men armed with box cutters hijacked four planes, crashing them into both towers of the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and a field in Pennsylvania. The men were part of an organization known as Al Qaeda, headed by exiled Saudi billionaire Osama bin Laden. Despite this quick consensus, the squabble over what *really* had happened was just beginning.

In the United States, among other places, the attack was considered an act of terrorism. In his State of the Union address the following January, President Bush spoke of "truths that we will never question" and declared that "evil is real, and it must be opposed." The rhetoric of good and evil dominated the discussion of these events in the United States: the "evil" of terrorism was perpetrated by "evildoers" who belonged to a "cult of evil which seeks to harm the innocent and thrives on human suffering." As journalist Michael Kinsley (2002) put it, "There has never in our entire history been a proposition from which fewer Americans dissent than 'Osama Bin Laden is evil.' "

However, in other parts of the world, the interpretation was radically different. Although official messages of sympathy and condolence were received from every world government except Iraq, in parts of the Middle East this official attitude did not always reflect the popular mood. Pro–bin Laden demonstrations erupted in many spots around the Islamic world immediately after the attacks. In Sudan and Pakistan, Osama bin Laden T-shirts were selling briskly. Protesters in Egypt chanted, "There is no God but God, and Bush is the enemy of God" (Macfarquhar 2001). To these people, the September 11 hijackers were not "evildoers" but martyrs. An Afghani cleric who had known one of the hijackers described him as "one of the pious men in the [Al Qaeda] organization," who "became a martyr, Allah bless his soul." Bin Laden himself (in a videotaped lecture) explicitly argued that it was the United States and its troops stationed in Saudi Arabia that were evil: "Every Muslim must rise to defend his religion. The wind of faith is blowing and the wind of change is blowing to remove evil from the Peninsula of Mohammed." From this point of view, it was a religious obligation to make war on the West, and the hijackers fulfilled their duties with great success, at the expense of their own lives.

SocIndex

Then and Now

1925: The incarceration rate for the U.S. population is 119 for every 100,000 people

2008: The incarceration rate for the U.S. population is 751 for every 100,000 people

Here and There

Maryland: African Americans represent 28% of the state's population and 76% of its prison population

France: Muslims represent 6% of the country's population and 50% of its prison population

This and That

Men are about 15 times more likely than women to be imprisoned; approximately 1.3% of American males are currently incarcerated.

Women outnumber men 5,430 to 5,300 in annual arrests for embezzlement; nearly one in four federal prisoners incarcerated for white collar crime is a woman.

How is it possible that people who are basically in agreement about what happened on September 11 can be in such extreme disagreement over the meaning of these events? To almost all Americans, the hijackers were deviants—terrorists and murderers. However, to the supporters of Al Qaeda, the hijackers were heroes and martyrs. How can this disagreement be explained? The sociological answer is that no behavior, not even one that is intended to kill great numbers of people, is inherently deviant. It is the cultural context, the values and norms of a particular society, that makes it so.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

Have you ever driven faster than the posted speed limit? Have you ever gotten caught picking your nose in public? Did you have your first taste of beer, wine, or hard liquor before you reached the legal drinking age? Did you pierce something (your lip, eyebrow, or belly button) that your grandmother wouldn't have wanted you to pierce? If you work in an office, did you ever take home a pen, pencil, or packet of Post-it notes?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are the embodiment of what we seek to understand in this chapter: you are deviant. Remember this as you read the chapter.

Defining Deviance

Deviance is a behavior, trait, or belief that departs from a norm and generates a negative reaction in a particular group. The norms and the group reactions are necessary for a behavior or characteristic to be defined as deviant (E. Goode 1997). The importance of norms becomes clear when we remember that what is deviant in one culture might be normal in another (see Chapter 4); even within the same culture, what was deviant a century ago might be perfectly acceptable now (and vice versa). The importance of group reactions is clear when we look at the varied reactions that norm violations generate: some violations are seen as only mildly deviant (like chewing with your mouth open), but others are so strongly taboo that they are almost unthinkable (like cannibalism).

Deviant behavior must be sufficiently serious or unusual to spark a negative sanction or punishment. For example, if you were having dinner with friends and used the wrong fork for your salad, you would be violating a minor norm but your friends probably wouldn't react in a negative fashion; they might not even notice. On the other hand, if you ate an entire steak dinner—meat, mashed potatoes, and salad—with your hands, your friends probably *would* react. They might criticize your behavior strongly ("That's totally disgusting!") and even refuse to eat with you again. This latter example, then, would be considered deviant behavior among your group of friends—and among most groups in American society.

deviance a behavior, trait, belief, or other characteristic that violates a norm and causes a negative reaction

Because definitions of deviance are constructed from cultural, historical, and situational norms, sociologists are interested in a number of topics under the rubric of deviance. First, how are norms and rules created, and how do certain norms and rules become especially important? Second, who is subject to the rules, and how is rule breaking identified? Third, what types of sanctions (punishments or rewards) are dispensed to society's violators? Fourth, how do people who break the rules see themselves, and how do others see them? And finally, how have sociologists attempted to explain rule making, rule breaking, and responses to rule breaking?

Deviance Across Cultures

It is important to remember that when sociologists use the term *deviant*, they are making a social judgment, never a moral one. If a particular behavior is considered deviant, this means that it violates the values and norms of a *particular* group, not that it is inherently wrong or that other groups will make the same judgment.

Much of the literature on deviance focuses on crime, but not only do different cultures define strikingly different behaviors as criminal, they also differ in how those crimes are punished. Most serious crime in the United States today is punished by imprisonment. This method of punishment was rare until the nineteenth century, however, as maintaining a prison requires considerable resources. Buildings must be constructed and maintained, guards and other

staff must be paid, and prisoners must be fed and clothed. For groups without these resources, incarceration is not a possibility, even assuming it would be a desirable option. Instead, there are a whole host of other techniques of punishment.

For example, the Amish, a religious community whose members do without modern devices like electricity, cars, and telephones, practice *meidung*, which means shunning those who violate the strict norms of the group (Kephart 2000). A biblical rule instructs them "not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one" (1 Corinthians 5:11). In other words, the Amish believe they should not associate with lawbreakers even when they come from within their own family. No one does business with, eats with, or even talks to the guilty party. The shunning is temporary, however: after a short period the violator is expected to publicly apologize and make amends, and is then welcomed back into the community.

A much more permanent method of punishment is total banishment from the community. For many Native American people, the social group was so important that banishment was considered a fate worse than death (Champagne 1994). It was one of a variety of practices that were used to maintain social control—along with shaming songs, contests, and challenges of strength—and something of a rarity, as the death penalty is in the United States today, because it completely severed ties between the group and the individual. Banishment has a long history of use in all parts of the world, from the British prisoners who were "transported" to Australia to Russian dissidents exiled to Siberia, and has been one of the most cost-effective methods of punishment ever discovered.

Just as methods of punishment vary between societies and groups, so they also change over time. In Colonial America, for example, corporal punishment was the rule for the majority of crimes (Samuel Walker 1997). These days, the phrase *corporal punishment* conjures up images of elementary school teachers spanking students, probably because spanking was the last vestige of what was once a vast repertoire of penal techniques. Thieves, pickpockets, and others who would today be considered petty criminals were flogged, had their ears cropped, had their noses slit, had their fingers and hands cut off, or were branded. These punishments were designed not only to deliver pain but also to mark the offender, and as such the particular punishment was often designed to fit the crime. A pickpocket might have a hand cut off; a forger might have an "F" branded on his forehead. Brands were also used to mark African American slaves as property during the 1800s.

Body Modification

Branding has long since died out as a method of punishment, but in a perfect illustration of the mutability of deviance, it is making a comeback as a form of body decoration (Parker 1998). What used to be an involuntary mark of shame has been reclaimed as a voluntary mark of pride. Small branding irons of stainless steel are heated with a blowtorch until white hot and held on the skin for a second or two. Some who undergo the procedure burn incense to cover the smell of their own flesh burning. Many African American fraternities have a long tradition of branding, usually in the shape of one of the fraternity's Greek letters. The practice has received a public boost in recent years as several popular athletes have prominently displayed their fraternity brands. Basketball star Michael Jordan sports such a brand, as does former Dallas Cowboy Emmitt Smith. Branding is spreading to other youth subcultures, where it is just another extension of tattoos, Mohawks, and body piercings as an outward manifestation of youthful rebellion.

When it comes to body modification, what Americans might label deviant might be identified as desirable or normal in other cultures and vice versa. Among the Suri of southwest Ethiopia, progressively larger plates are inserted into the lower lip so that it gradually becomes enlarged. The Padaung women of Burma stretch their necks with brass rings. Young girls begin by encircling their necks with just a few rings, then add more as they grow; by the time of maturity, their necks are considerably elongated. Breast augmentation surgery is commonplace in the United States, but in Brazil, where large breasts are considered undesirable, a breast augmentation would be regarded as impairing rather than improving beauty.

Body modification does not always need to be dramatic. In reality, there are a great number of subtle methods of body modification practiced by most Americans that may not seem so obvious if we concentrate on nose rings and biker tattoos. First of all, there have always been body modifications for the middle and upper classes. Corsets, worn by women through the ages until the early twentieth century, are an obvious example. Stomachs were flattened with "stays," long strips of some rigid material like whalebone. A tightly laced corset could achieve a dramatically narrow waistline, but often at a serious cost to the wearer's health. Women sometimes even had ribs removed in order to accommodate them.

These days, we have a rich array of techniques to bring our bodies into line with contemporary standards. Recently the Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of injections of Botox, a strain of botulism toxin that works by freezing facial nerves, for removing fine lines and wrinkles on the forehead. The hair salon is another great unacknowledged



One Culture's Deviant Behavior Might Be Desirable or Normal in Another Padaung women use brass rings to stretch their necks, a Suri woman uses plates to modify her lip, an American man has split and pierced his tongue, and an American woman has a rose tattoo on her hip.

center for body modification. If you get a perm, you are breaking the disulfide bonds in your hair and reshaping them to straighten them or make them curly. Even a simple haircut is a type of body modification—luckily, for those of us who have gotten bad haircuts, they're temporary! Some body modifications seem so "normal" that we practice them as routines without considering how they may seem deviant elsewhere. Other cultures may view Americans' obsession with hair removal—shaving, plucking, tweezing, and waxing—as bizarre. As you can see, whether it's corsets, branding, or shaving your legs, the boundaries between beauty and deviance are fluid across time and place.

Global Perspective

Delicious or Disgusting? Food, Culture, and Deviance

Although as Americans we enjoy a great number of ethnic foods, there are some food boundaries we will not cross. One is the ancient practice of *entomophagy*, the eating of insects. Even though the 1,462 known species of edible insects are very environmentally friendly to raise and have a better feed-to-meat ratio and better protein-to-fat ratio than any other animal, there are few taboos as indestructible in America as that against eating bugs.

People in Algeria traditionally eat desert locusts, aborigines in Australia snack on certain moths and grubs, some Africans sauté termites, and the Japanese sometimes eat fried grasshoppers.

Probably the most notorious of culinary insects is the agave worm found in bottles of the Mexican liquor *mezcal*, usually eaten (if at all) in America as the result of a drunken dare rather than for its nutritional value.

One thing Americans *do* love is bacon cheeseburgers. For billions of people throughout the world, though, this is an abomination. It violates the dietary laws of three major world religions (Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam), and members of those groups may look on you with horror, disgust, or even pity as they watch you eat one. Jewish dietary laws called *kashrut* prohibit eating meat and dairy products at the same meal. The Hindu religion prohibits eating beef, and the Islamic religion regards pork as *haraam*, or forbidden food, and Jewish laws also prohibit eating pork. Sociologists maintain that what is deviant is always socially learned, relative to a particular culture. Certainly with food, standards of deviance vary widely across cultures.



How to Eat Fried Worms A cook at the upscale restaurant Hostería Santo Domingo in Mexico City adds a dollop of guacamole to a plate of deep-fried worms.

Theories of Deviance

In this section, we will learn how three sociological theories we considered in Chapter 2—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism—can be applied to deviance. We will also learn about other, related theories that have been developed specifically to explain particular aspects of deviance.

Functionalism

As you may recall, adherents of functionalism argue that each element of social structure helps maintain the stability of society. What, then, is the function of deviance for society? Emile Durkheim came up with a couple of functions. First, deviance can help a society clarify its moral boundaries. We are reminded about our shared notions of what is right when we have to address wrongdoings of various sorts. In 2005, Terri Schiavo, a hospital patient from St. Petersburg, Florida, received national attention when a legal battle was fought over her life. Schiavo had been in a persistent vegetative state since 1990 and kept alive through a gastric feeding tube. Her husband, Michael, petitioned the courts in 1998 to end life support—he thought it was the right thing to do and was what Terri would have wanted. Her parents, Mary and Robert Schindler, took legal action against Michael's decision—they thought it was wrong. While most people might have had a vague idea of how they felt about artificially prolonging life, the Schiavo case forced them to think

concretely about how such choices affect actual people. After a seven-year process, the courts sided with Michael Schiavo, and on March 18, 2005, his wife's feeding tube was removed. She died 13 days later.

Another function of deviance is to promote social cohesion (one of functionalism's valued ideals); people can be brought together as a community in the face of crime or other violations. For example, while the country was divided over the decision in the Schiavo case, an opinion poll by ABC News on March 21, 2005, reported that 70 percent of Americans believed that Michael Schiavo had the authority to make decisions on behalf of his wife and that the case should not have been a federal matter. In the same poll, 63 percent maintained that the federal government was involved solely for political advantage. Whatever they believed about prolonging life, the majority of Americans thus agreed that the choice was best made by family and not the government.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists, who study inequalities of wealth and power, note that inequalities are present in our definitions of deviance as well. In other words, they believe that rules are applied unequally and that punishments for rule violators are unequally distributed: those at the top are subject to different rules and sanctions than those nearer the bottom, and the behaviors of less powerful groups and individuals are more likely to be criminalized than the behaviors of the powerful.

Author Kate Bornstein's "Who's on Top?" (1998) provides a useful way to look at hierarchies of power and privilege in our society. Bornstein uses a pyramid analogy: the bottom represents the masses of people who have little power; the higher on the pyramid we go, fewer people amass more and more power. Bornstein argues that the top of the pyramid is the perfect identity—an imaginary person who represents all the different facets of power in our society. This person would be a white, rich, heterosexual male who is educated, athletic, and handsome, owns a home, has never broken the law, and is married with two children. The more we deviate from this perfect identity (and all of us do in one way or another), the lower we fall in the pyramid.

Sociologist William Chambliss looked at the history of vagrancy laws to demonstrate the relationship between power and deviance. According to Chambliss (1973), vagrancy laws have always been used to target different groups—the



Who's on Top? Kate Bornstein represents power hierarchies with a pyramid. She argues that the top of the pyramid represents the "perfect" identity. The more we deviate from this identity—as we all do—the lower we fall in the pyramid.

homeless, the unemployed, racial minorities—depending on who seemed most threatening to the elites at the time. When preparing for big events like political conventions or televised sports tournaments, for instance, local police officers may sweep "undesirables" from downtown areas so that a city appears to be free from panhandlers, drug users, hookers, or the homeless (at least until the cameras are turned off).

As recently as 2003, some U.S. states still imposed heterosexuality on their citizens through antisodomy laws, which prohibited any sexual acts that did not lead to procreation. While in theory antisodomy laws could include acts like masturbation and heterosexual oral sex, in practice these laws are generally imposed against same-sex partners. Before the Supreme Court repealed all state antisodomy laws in *Lawrence vs. Texas* (2003), sexual acts done in the privacy of your own home could be penalized with fines and jail time in states like Virginia, Michigan, and Texas. From a conflict theorist perspective, antisodomy laws are a way for the heterosexual majority to control homosexuals.

As a final example, in 2006, Rochester, New York, had the highest murder rate per capita in the entire state, including New York City. The mayor, Robert Duffy, proposed a new law that would require all young people age 16 and under living within city limits to be off the streets from 11:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. during the summer break from school. Because statistics have shown that more crime occurs during the summer among youth living in the city, Duffy believed that the curfew would reduce violence. Not only does the curfew demonstrate ageism, in that control is wielded by adults over relatively powerless youth, but also classism, as the curfew applies only to kids who live in the city, leaving wealthier teens in the suburbs free to do what they like. Unfortunately, there is a good deal of evidence to support the conflict theorists' argument that rules are applied unequally in our hierarchical society.

Structural Strain Theory

Robert Merton's **structural strain theory** (1938/1976) provides a bridge between functionalist and conflict theories of deviance. Like Durkheim, Merton acknowledges that some deviance is inevitable in society. But like conflict theorists, he argues that an individual's position in the social structure will affect his experience of deviance and conformity. Social inequality can create situations in which people experience tension (or strain) between the goals society says they should be working toward (like financial success) and the means they have available to meet those goals (not everyone is able to work hard at a legitimate job). The rewards of conformity, therefore, are available only to those who can pursue approved goals through approved means. Any other combination of means and goals is deviant in one way or another. **Innovators**, for example, might seek financial success via unconventional means (such as drug dealing or embezzlement). **Ritualists** go through the conventional motions while abandoning all hope of success, and **retreatists** (like dropouts or hermits) renounce the culture's goals and means entirely and live outside conventional norms altogether. At the far end of the continuum, **rebels** reject the cultural definitions of success and the normative means of achieving it and advocate radical alternatives to the existing social order.

For example, consider the characters in the 1999 film *Office Space*, a comedy that satirizes a large, bureaucracy-laden business. In the film, conformity is represented by Bill Lumbergh, a high-ranking

structural strain theory Robert Merton's argument that in an unequal society the tension or strain between socially approved goals and an individual's ability to meet those goals through socially approved means will lead to deviance as individuals reject either the goals or the means or both

innovators individuals who accept society's approved goals but not society's approved means to achieve them

ritualists individuals who have given up hope of achieving society's approved goals but still operate according to society's approved means

retreatists individuals who reject both society's approved goals and the means by which to achieve them

rebels individuals who reject society's approved goals and means and instead create and work toward their own (sometimes revolutionary) goals using new means

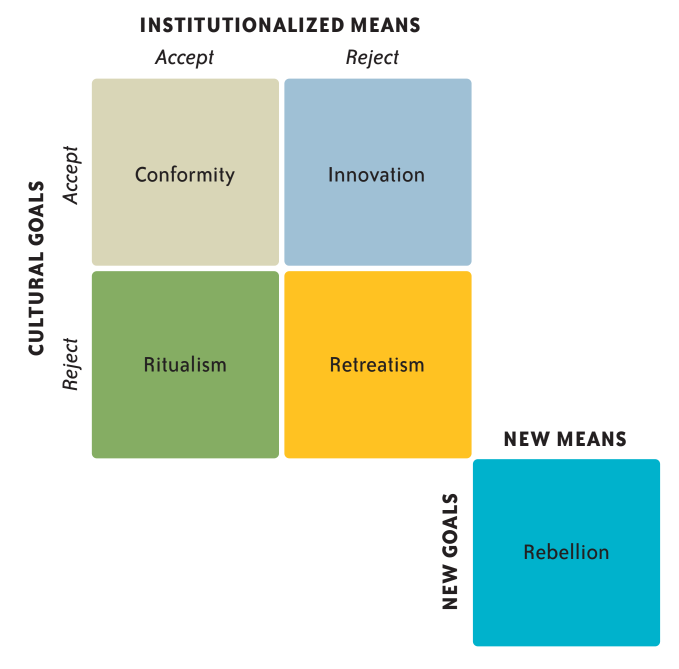


FIGURE 7.1 Merton's Typology of Deviance Different orientations toward society's goals and differential access to the means to achieve those goals combine to create different categories of deviance.



Structural Strain Characters in the comedy *Office Space* exemplify Merton's categories of deviants. Peter Gibbons (right) is an innovator who plans to rob the company and thwart his conformist manager, Bill Lumbergh (left).

boss who has apparently attained his position by following the rules of the organization. The protagonist, Peter Gibbons, is an innovator who spends most of the movie attempting to find meaning and fulfillment in a job that increasingly makes little sense. Rather than adhering to the bizarre and elaborate rules within his organization, Peter comes up with a scheme to rob the company. The most humorous character in the movie, Milton, is a ritualist. Milton shows up to work every day and puts up with a lot of abuse from his superiors even though, as we soon learn, he was fired five years ago and never removed from the payroll. Peter's neighbor Lawrence provides an example of a retreatist: he doesn't work in an office at all. By the end of the movie, Peter realizes that happiness can't be found working in a bureaucratized organization. He rebels by taking a lower-paying job as a construction worker and finds fulfillment in his personal relationships instead.

Symbolic Interactionism

While conflict theorists and functionalists focus on inequalities and the social functions of deviance, interactionists consider the way that interpersonal relationships and everyday interactions shape definitions of deviance. One such approach is Edwin Sutherland's **differential association theory** (Sutherland 1939; Sutherland et al. 1992), which asserts that we learn to be deviant through our interactions with others who break the rules. This is the theory of deviance that your mother subscribed to when you were a teenager: don't hang out with the bad kids!

This theory of deviance seems at first glance to be pretty sensible—interacting often with those who break the rules would seem to socialize an individual into their rule-breaking culture. But as it turns out, not all who hang out with deviants become deviant themselves, and plenty of people who engage in deviant acts have never consorted with other rulebreakers. Also, in cases where deviance is not the result of a willful act (mental illness, for example), a learning theory such as this one is not a useful explanation. While differential association theory seeks to explain "why they do it," it cannot fully explain every case of deviant behavior—nor can any theory of deviance.

LABELING THEORY Howard Becker's **labeling theory** (1963) proposes that deviance is not inherent in any act, belief, or condition; instead, it is determined by the audience. A man who kills an intruder who is attacking his child may be labeled a hero, while a man who kills a cashier in the process of robbing a store may be labeled a villain. Even though the act of murder is the same, the way the person is treated differs greatly depending on the label.

Labeling theory recognizes that labels will vary depending on the culture, time period, and context. David Rosenhan's study "On Being Sane in Insane Places" (1973) provides a striking demonstration of the power of labeling and the importance of context. Rosenhan and seven other researchers gained admission to psychiatric hospitals as patients. Other than falsifying their names and occupations, the eight subjects gave honest answers to all but one of the questions in the entrance examination; they all complained of hearing voices, a symptom often linked to schizophrenia. Nevertheless, the subjects felt certain that once they were hospitalized, they would be quickly exposed as "pseudopatients," not really mentally ill.

In fact, the opposite turned out to be true. Once admitted, the pseudopatients turned immediately to the task of getting themselves discharged—and failed miserably. Although they behaved as normally and pleasantly as possible, doctors and nurses continued to treat them as mentally ill patients in need of treatment. No amount of explanation on the part of the pseudopatients could convince hospital staff of their sanity (though, in an interesting twist, it was usually obvious to the other patients). When they were finally discharged (after one to seven weeks!), it was not because the staff had finally seen through the deception; they were all released with

differential association theory Edwin Sutherland's hypothesis that we learn to be deviant through our associations with deviant peers

labeling theory Howard Becker's idea that deviance is a consequence of external judgments, or labels, which modify the individual's self-concept and change the way others respond to the labeled person



Fat Actress Kirstie Alley turned a potentially negative label into a positive one by using the media's focus on her weight gain (primary deviation) to leverage a deal for a television show in which she capitalized on her fat identity (secondary deviation). After her show was cancelled, she won a contract as a spokesperson for weight loss (tertiary deviance) with Jenny Craig.

their schizophrenia "in remission." As Rosenhan concludes, "Once labeled schizophrenic, the pseudopatient was stuck with that label" (1973, p. 253). The effects of this "sticky" deviant label on actual patients can follow them through their lives, even after they leave the hospital.

Labeling theory is also concerned with how individuals think of themselves once a deviant label has been applied. Recall Cooley's concept of the "looking-glass self": how we perceive ourselves depends in part on how others see us, so if others react to us as deviant, we are likely to internalize that label (even if we object to it). Applying deviant labels can also lead to further deviance, as a patient moves from **primary deviation** (the thing that gets her labeled in the first place) to **secondary deviation** (a deviant identity or career) (Lemert 1951).

primary deviation in labeling theory, the act or attitude that causes one to be labeled deviant

secondary deviation in labeling theory, the deviant identity or career that develops as a result of being labeled deviant

For instance, Kirstie Alley, a popular TV actress in the 1980s and 1990s, gained enough weight in the early 2000s that she received national attention for it. In her case, the primary deviation was gaining weight; she became labeled as a fat person. Alley's response was to create a show called *Fat Actress*, in which she used comedy as a way of demonstrating her secondary deviation (her identity as an overweight American). Because Alley was unable to avoid the media's scrutiny of her weight, she decided to participate in publicizing her label through her show and through numerous interviews on the topic.

Although deviant labels are sticky—they are hard to shake—it is sometimes possible for an individual to turn

TABLE 7.1 ***Theory in Everyday Life***

Perspective	Approach to Deviance	Case Study: Plagiarism
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Deviance clarifies moral boundaries and promotes social cohesion.	Punishing those who plagiarize separates those who should be in college from those who aren't responsible enough.
Structural Strain Theory	An individual's position in society determines whether they have the means to achieve goals or must otherwise turn to deviance.	A student's attitude about plagiarizing depends on whether she has the means to write the paper.
CONFLICT THEORY	Definitions and rules of deviance are applied unequally based on power.	Students with fewer resources are punished more harshly and have fewer options afterward; students with more money or connections can either transfer to another school or rely on parents for help.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM		
Differential Association Theory	Deviance is learned through interactions with others who break the rules.	Students learn to cheat because they hang out with other students who plagiarize.
Labeling Theory	Deviance is determined by the audience; applying deviant labels to an individual may lead them to further deviance.	Plagiarism may be labeled deviant in U.S. courses but not in Russia or India; a student who is caught plagiarizing may come to believe she is unable to write without cheating.

Changing the World

Tuy Sobil and the Tiny Toones of Phnom Penh

All around the world, from Latin America to South-East Asia and beyond, there is an unusual problem brewing. American-style gang activity is appearing in new areas, complete with turf wars, drug dealing, graffiti, and crime, just like in troubled American cities. What's really unusual about this new gang problem is its source. As you might expect, it came from the United States, but instead of local teenagers imitating gangsters they see in the American media, places like Cambodia and El Salvador are getting an influx of actual gang members, unwilling immigrants deported from the United States.

In 1996, following the first attack on the World Trade Center and with an election to think about, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which dramatically increased the number of offenses for which noncitizens could be deported, sending many into permanent exile for nonviolent misdemeanor offenses, even if they served a their sentence and had a perfect record of good conduct (Human Rights Watch 2007). The law was especially hard on families, as it was made retroactive, so legal immigrants who had committed crimes years ago were suddenly eligible to be deported, with no grounds for appeal.

Although they may seem less sympathetic, some of the most poignant cases involve troubled young people or gang members who have been deported back to countries they had little or no memory of. El Salvador and Cambodia in particular have produced many troublesome cases, because those countries produced a great many refugees who differ from traditional immigrants in a number of ways. While immigrants purposefully seek out a new home, refugees are driven by violence and starvation. They often arrive in a new country with physical and psychological scars and little or no support and find themselves living in bewildering new cities. The children of such refugees are often at-risk as youth and sometimes end up involved in gangs, which now can lead them to be deported back to their "native" country.

The effort to fight gangs like Mara Salvatrucha, which was "founded by Central Americans who fled wars at home in the 1980s, and landed in US ghettos without work or protection from existing gangs," or "the Tiny Little Rascals gang, the main Asian gang on the West Coast," has led to a vast increase in the number of deportations for criminal behavior, including many legal residents who had never applied for citizenship (Lakshmanan 2006). Many of the young men who have been deported this way have only the haziest memories of their "homelands" and had never thought of themselves as anything but American. Most are not fluent in any language but English. Many had moved to the United States as infants, and in the case of some, had been born in refugee camps and had never before lived in the country to which they were "re"-patriated.

This was the situation that Tuy Sobil faced following a conviction for armed robbery at age 18. After spending 10 years in various jails and immigration facilities, Sobil was repatriated to Cambodia, a country he had never set foot in before, having been born in a refugee camp in Thailand after his parents fled the Khmer Rouge. He has not seen any of his family since then, including his son, and deportees are legally barred from ever reentering the United States. His nickname is K.K., gang-style initials for "Crazy Crip," after the gang he had belonged to when he lived in Long Beach, California. But since arriving in Cambodia he has reinvented himself, leaving his gang persona behind. Like many other deportees, he arrived in Phnom Penh with few resources, but he has persevered and even triumphed in his new home. After working as a drug counselor, he founded the Tiny Toones, a break-dancing troupe he hopes can "help save



Tiny Toones Break-Dancing School Tuy Sobil, aka K.K. (far right), started the break-dancing school in Cambodia after being deported from Long Beach, California.

Cambodian street kids from the sort of dead-end detour he took" (Krausz 2007). With little more than a boom box and the skills he learned as a teenage "b-boy" (slang for break dancer) he found a way to organize and teach hundreds of street kids who had nowhere else to turn. Having grown up in a harsh environment, with few hopes for success, Sobil understands the needs of the street children of Cambodia. And he hopes that break dancing can help kids stay out of trouble and build a sense of community based on positive achievements. Learning head spins, "one-hand hops, elbow tracks, flairs, halos, air tracks and windmills" brings a little slice of old-school hip hop flair to the streets of Cambodia and helps provide the hundreds of members of the troupe with a place to go and a positive focus for their energy.

Sobil has been supported in his efforts by a variety of international nonprofit groups, and at least one group of American students has journeyed to Cambodia to make a film about him and the Tiny Toones. The Tiny Toones performed at a Christmas party for the American embassy in 2007 and were then invited to visit the United States, a trip that Sobil can't make with them, as he is legally barred from ever entering the United States again. But ultimately he has succeeded, and despite the desperate poverty and hardships faced by the children he mentors, he continues to work at changing the world, one b-boy at a time.

what could have been a negative identity into a positive one. John Kitsuse (1980) calls this **tertiary deviation**, and Kirstie Alley demonstrates this level of deviance as well. Shortly after the cancellation of *Fat Actress*, Alley was able to negotiate a contract with Jenny Craig, a national weight-loss center. After losing 65 pounds, she is nevertheless using her status as a "former fatty" and her subsequent weight loss to stay in the public limelight.

LABELING THEORY AND SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

Some of the most exciting, but also disturbing, research on labeling theory has focused on **self-fulfilling prophecy**, a term coined by Robert Merton in his 1948 article of the same name. Merton's concept was derived from the so-called Thomas theorem, formulated by sociologist W. I. Thomas in 1928, which held that "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." From this theorem, Merton developed his notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy, which is basically a prediction that causes itself to come true merely by being stated. He offers the example of a bank in the Depression-era 1930s that collapsed through "a rumor of insolvency," when enough investors became convinced that the bank was out of money (1948, p. 194).

Merton argues that the self-fulfilling prophecy can be used to explain racial and ethnic conflict in the United States, and subsequent research has borne him out. For example, Elijah Anderson's *Streetwise* (1990) details how the police and community perceive black male inner-city teenagers as a criminal element, with the result that they are more likely to be arrested than other teenagers, and citizens are also more likely to report black males for crimes. This cloud of suspicion that surrounds black urban teens requires them to defend their innocence in situations that other teens can negotiate with little or no difficulty. Young black males are also more likely to be incarcerated, which only feeds the public image of criminality. The racial discrimination and profiling by police and the community thus lead to a negative cycle that is difficult to break.

Labels alone are not 100 percent deterministic, and prophecies are not always self-fulfilling. But in our society, deviant labels can override other aspects of individual identity and exert powerful effects on self-image, treatment by others, and even social and institutional policies.

tertiary deviation in labeling theory, the rejection or transformation of the stigma of a deviant identity

self-fulfilling prophecy an inaccurate statement or belief which, by altering the situation, becomes accurate; a prediction that causes itself to come true

stigma Erving Goffman's term for any physical or social attribute that devalues a person or group's identity and which may exclude those who are devalued from normal social interaction

Stigma and Deviant Identity

In ancient Greece, criminals and slaves were branded with hot irons, making a mark called a **stigma**, from the Greek word for "tattoo." The stigma was meant to serve as an outward indication that there was something shameful about the bearer, and to this day we continue to use the term to signify some disgrace or failing. Although we no longer live in a society where we are forced to wear our rule violations branded onto our bodies, stigmatized identities still carry serious social consequences.

Stigma, a central concept in the sociology of deviance, was analyzed and elaborated by Erving Goffman in his book of the same name (1962). Once an individual has been labeled as deviant, he is stigmatized and acquires what Goffman calls a "spoiled identity." There are three main types of stigma: physical (including physical or mental impairments), moral (signs of a flawed character), and tribal (membership in a discredited or oppressed group). Almost any departure from the norm can have a stigmatizing effect, including a physical disability, a past battle with alcohol or mental illness, time served in jail, or sexual transgressions. Goffman recognizes that what may once have been a stigmatized identity may change over time or may vary according to culture or social context. Being black or Jewish is a stigma only if one lives in a racist or anti-Semitic society. In a community entirely populated by African Americans, it is white people who may be stigmatized; an all-Jewish enclave may see non-Jews as outside the norm. Goffman is careful to note that not all stigmatized identities are just or deserved—only that they are specific to the norms and prejudices of a particular group, time period, or context.

Goffman was particularly interested in the effects of stigmatization on individual identity and interactions with others. At the macro level, society does not treat the stigmatized very well; if you suffer from depression, for example, you may find that your health insurance does not cover your treatment. At the micro level, you may also find that your friends don't fully understand your depression-related problems. In fact, you may find yourself working to keep others from finding out that you are depressed or that you are receiving treatment for depression, precisely in order to avoid such situations. Having a stigmatized identity—of any sort—makes navigating the social world difficult.

Passing

How can stigmatized individuals negotiate the perils of everyday interaction? One strategy analyzed by Goffman is



Imitation of Life In this 1959 film, Juanita Moore (right) plays a widow whose daughter, played by Susan Kohner (left), tries to pass as white and shun her mother.

called **passing**, or concealing stigmatizing information. The allusion to racial passing is entirely intended—Goffman means to call to mind the experiences of light-skinned African Americans who, for over 300 years and particularly in the decades before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, sought access to the privileges of whiteness (and relief from discrimination) by concealing their racial heritage and passing as white. The case of racial passing is instructive in developing an understanding of all types of passing—such as the passing a depressed person might engage in to hide his condition.

In-Group Orientation

Not everyone can pass, though, because not all stigma is concealable. While it may be possible to conceal your status as an ex-convict or victim of rape, it is more difficult to conceal extreme shortness or obesity. And while some people cannot pass, others refuse do so as a matter of principle. These people don't believe that their identities should be seen as deviant, and they certainly don't believe that they should have to change or conceal those identities just to make "normals" feel more comfortable. They have what Goffman calls an **in-group orientation**—they reject the standards that mark them as deviant and may even actively propose new standards in which their special identities are well within the normal range. For example, such groups as ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and NAAFA (the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance) have allowed members of stigmatized groups to feel greater self-esteem and to unite in fighting against prejudice and discrimination. Activism might also take a more individual form of merely being "out," open and unapologetic about one's identity. This in itself can be difficult and exhausting (as passing is); however, those with an in-group orientation see it as a more responsible, genuine, and powerful way to address society's changing definitions of deviance.

Deviance Avowal and Voluntary Outsiders

Under most circumstances, people reject the deviant label and what it seems to imply about their personal identity. However, there are some who *choose* to be called a deviant. Those who belong to a particular subculture, for example—whether outlaw biker, rock musician, or eco-warrior—may celebrate their membership in a deviant group. Howard Becker (1963) refers to such individuals as **outsiders**, people living in one way or another outside mainstream society. They may pass among "normals," continuing to work and participate in everyday life. Or their deviant identity may have become a master status, thus preventing them from interacting along conventional lines; when this happens, a person's deviance may be thought to reveal his underlying nature. For instance, members of the punk subculture, easily identified by their distinctive look, are generally assumed to be loud troublemakers, whatever their individual personality traits may be.

Some potential deviants may actually initiate the labeling process against themselves or provoke others to do so, a condition Ralph Turner (1972) calls **deviance avowal**. Turner suggests that it may be useful to conceive of deviance as a role rather than as an isolated behavior that violates a single norm. And in some cases, it may be beneficial for an individual to identify with the deviant role. In the Alcoholics Anonymous program, for example, the first step in recovery is for a member to admit that she is an alcoholic. Since total abstinence from drinking is the goal, only those who believe they have a drinking problem and willingly accept the label of alcoholic can take the suggested steps toward recovery.

Deviance avowal can also help a person avoid the pressures of having to adopt certain conventional norms, or what Turner calls the "neutralization of commitment." For instance, a recovering

passing presenting yourself as a member of a different racial or ethnic group than the one you were born into

in-group orientation among stigmatized individuals, an orientation away from mainstream society and toward new standards that value their group identity

outsiders according to Howard Becker, those labeled deviant and subsequently segregated from "normal" society

deviance avowal process by which an individual self-identifies as deviant and initiates his or her own labeling process



Forming Friendships in the Face of Stigma

In her book *Autobiography of a Face* (1994), poet Lucy Grealy tells the story of her struggle with childhood cancer and the disfiguring surgery that resulted. Because of a series of operations that removed one-third of her jaw, she survived Ewing's sarcoma but grew to adulthood looking—and feeling—very different from her peers.

When other kids reacted negatively to her scars, Grealy tried to cover them with turtlenecks, scarves, and hats but couldn't completely conceal her disfigurement. Boys at school yelled at her to "take off that monster mask!" Ironically, the only time she felt perfectly comfortable was on Halloween, when she could wear a mask and feel just like part of the crowd. Her high school years were lonely—she had a hard time making friends and worried that she would never have a boyfriend or never be in love. She felt as though she fit in only when she was with her family—or on the children's ward in a hospital.

At Sarah Lawrence College, a private school just outside New York City, Grealy finally found a group of friends with whom she felt comfortable, who were themselves outsiders:

> To be on the fringe at a school as fringy as Sarah Lawrence was itself an accomplishment, but it was this very quality that I loved most about my friends. They wore their mantles as "outsiders" with pride, whether because of their politics, their sexuality, or anything else that makes a person feel outside of the norm. Their self-definition was the very thing that put me at ease with them. I didn't feel judged. (p. 196)

Grealy finally experienced real friendship when she was able to feel accepted by others, and she felt this only with those who were similarly stigmatized. While they didn't share her specific facial disfigurement, they each felt marginalized or abnormal in some way. They were, in Goffmanian terms, "the own"—those who share the experience of being stigmatized and thus find comfort and safety in each other's presence.



Lucy Grealy

Grealy suffered through several more grueling reconstructive surgeries on her face, which left her in chronic pain. After college, she enrolled in the Iowa Writer's Workshop, where her roommate was another student she had known from Sarah Lawrence, Ann Patchett. The two women became best friends and, as they moved from the Midwest to New York in pursuit of their careers, embarked on a relationship that helped define their lives and work over the next twenty years. Grealy went on to win awards for her poetry and essays and wrote her critically acclaimed and hugely successful memoir. Patchett, too, became successful as an award-winning novelist (Patchett 2001).

Unfortunately, Lucy Grealy's story does not have a happy ending. Ultimately fame, fortune, and friendship were not enough to save her from her own demons. Ann Patchett's book *Truth & Beauty: A Friendship* (2004) details Grealy's decline into depression, drug addiction, and repeated attempts to commit suicide. She died in December 2002 from what was ruled an accidental overdose of heroin.

It would be too simplistic to conclude that Grealy killed herself because of the years of suffering she had endured as a result of her stigmatized identity. There are too many factors involved in her complex life story to assign blame with any assurance. Perhaps she would have become depressed or addicted even if she hadn't been disfigured. Perhaps it was the physical pain rather than the psychic pain that became too much for her. Whatever the reasons, these two books about Lucy Grealy's life and death reveal in gritty and compelling details the desperate desire to fit in and the lengths to which this woman went in order to pass as "normal" in society.



United Against Prejudice Groups like the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance embrace an in-group orientation and reject the standards that mark them as deviant.

alcoholic might resist taking a typical nine-to-five job, claiming that the stress of corporate work had always made him drink before. Another recovering alcoholic who refuses to attend family gatherings might offer as an excuse that she can't be around family because they drink at every occasion. In such ways, people become voluntary outsiders, finding it preferable to be a deviant in spite of the prevailing norms of mainstream society.



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Personal Stories of AA Members

In this Data Workshop, you will examine the life history of selected members of Alcoholics Anonymous in order to analyze the process of deviance avowal. You will be doing a content analysis of an existing source (see Chapter 3 for a review of this research method). The stories appear in *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939/2001), often referred to by members as the "Big Book," which features accounts of thousands of recovered alcoholics as well as AA's basic twelve-step program. The first 164 pages have remained virtually the same since the first printing in 1939, but in each subsequent edition, the personal stories of additional members have been added. These stories are intended to help newcomers to the program to identify with and relate to the lives of other recovering alcoholics.

For this workshop, you will focus on "Women Suffer Too," one of the first stories published in the Big Book. The title refers to the fact that years ago many people believed that only men were alcoholics. The story is told from the perspective of a sober alcoholic looking back on her life and understanding that through the process of deviance avowal (by accepting her alcoholism) she was able to transform a negative past into a positive life.

The text of the story can be found in the Big Book or accessed online at silkworth.net/bbstories/2nd/222_229.html. Read it in its entirety, keeping in mind how the study of life histories or oral histories can reveal important features of societal norms and everyday life. Pay close attention to how the story describes both deviant behavior and the process of deviance avowal, and consider the following questions.

- Identify the instances of deviance described in the writer's story. Why do we consider these behaviors deviant?
- In what ways was she in denial, or actively trying to disavow the deviant behavior?
- At what point did she engage in deviance avowal?
- How did deviance avowal affect her self-concept?
- In what ways did deviance avowal allow her to consider her past in a different light?
- How has her deviant identity become a positive part of her life?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare some written notes based on your answers to the questions above that you can refer to during in-class discussions. Share your reactions and conclusions with other students in small-group discussions. Listen for any differences in each other's insights.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay answering the questions above. Include your own reactions to the story. Make sure to refer to specific passages that support your analysis.

Studying Deviance

When studying deviance, sociologists have often focused on the most obvious forms of deviant behavior—crime, mental illness, and sexual deviance. This "nuts and sluts" approach (Liazos 1972) tends to focus on the deviance of the poor and

powerless, while accepting the values and norms of the powerful in an unacknowledged way. Social scientists tended to apply definitions of deviance uncritically in their research and failed to question the ways in which the definitions themselves may have perpetuated inequalities and untruths.

One sociologist at the University of California–Berkeley, David Matza (1969), set out to remedy this situation. Matza urged social scientists to set aside their preconceived notions in order to understand deviant phenomena on their own terms—to take a "naturalist" perspective. Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp, for example, spent three years with a dozen drag queens in order to gain perspective for their research in *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret*—at one point, they even performed onstage. Matza's fundamental admonition to those studying deviance is that they must appreciate the diversity and complexity of a particular social world—the world of street gangs, drug addicts, strippers, fight clubs, outlaw bikers, homeless people, or the transgendered. If such a world is approached as a simple social pathology that needs correcting, the researcher will never fully understand it. A sociological perspective requires that we seek insight without applying judgment—a difficult task indeed.

The Foreground of Deviance: The Emotional Attraction of Doing Bad Deeds

Most sociological perspectives on deviance focus on aspects of a person's background that would dispose him to act in deviant ways. This is the case with both functionalist and conflict perspectives: for example, many sociological studies of crime make the case that youth with limited access to education may be more likely to turn to dealing drugs or theft. Labeling theory also suggests that a person's social location is a crucial determinant: it shapes how others see the person, as well as his or her own self-view, and these perceptions can lead a person from primary to secondary deviance and into a deviant career. One of the main problems with such theories, however, is that they can't explain why some people with backgrounds that should incline them to deviance never actually violate any rules, while others with no defining background factors do become deviant.

Approaches that focus exclusively on background factors neglect one very important element—the deviant's own in-the-moment experience of committing a deviant act, what sociologist Jack Katz refers to as the "foreground" of deviance. In *The Seductions of Crime* (1988), Katz looks at how emotionally seductive crime can be, how shoplifting or even committing murder might produce a particular kind of rush that becomes the very reason for carrying out the act. For example, what shoplifters often seek is not the DVD or perfume as much as the "sneaky thrill" of stealing it. Initially drawn to stealing by the thought of just how easy it might be, the shoplifter tests her ability to be secretly deviant—in public—while appearing to be perfectly normal. This perspective explains why the vast majority of shoplifters are not from underprivileged backgrounds but are people who could easily afford the stolen items. How else might we explain why a wealthy and famous actress such as Winona Ryder would try to smuggle clothes out of a department store?

Similarly, muggers' and robbers' actions reveal that they get more satisfaction from their crimes than from the things they steal. They are excited by the sense of superiority they gain by setting up and playing tricks on their victims. In fact,



The Seduction of Crime Jack Katz's research on the emotional rush produced by crime might explain why a wealthy actress like Winona Ryder would try to steal clothes from a department store.

they can come to feel morally superior, thinking that their victims deserve their fate because they are less observant and savvy. Even murderous rages can be seen as seductive ways to overcome an overwhelming sense of humiliation. A victim of adultery, for example, may kill instead of simply ending the relationship because murder, or "righteous slaughter," feels like the most appropriate response. In effect, he is seduced by the possibility of becoming a powerful avenger rather than remaining a wounded and impotent victim.

Katz's foreground model of deviance deepens our appreciation for the complexity of deviant behavior and reminds us that social actors are not mere products of their environment but active participants in creating meaningful experiences for themselves even if harmful to others.

Deviance in a New Interactional Context: Cyberbullying

Although parents and schools have been worried about cyberbullying ever since children and teenagers started using the internet, the phenomenon moved to the forefront of national consciousness after the suicide of 13-year-old Megan Meier in October of 2006. Megan had received a MySpace message from a boy named Josh, who said that he lived nearby but that his family didn't have a phone. Over the next several weeks they sent messages back and forth and seemed to have become close very quickly. Then, without warning, Josh started taunting and abusing her. Megan was devastated and hung herself in her closet. Several weeks later the Meiers learned that "Josh" was not a real person and that the MySpace account had been created by their neighbor, Lori Drew, in order to get back at Megan for snubbing her daughter. But regardless of who was sending the messages, Megan was a victim of **cyberbullying**, the use of electronic media (webpages, social networking sites, e-mail, instant messengers, and cell phones) to tease, harass, threaten, or humiliate someone.

Researchers say that between 10 percent and 30 percent of all teenagers have been victims of cyberbullying, with girls and older teens more likely to be at risk. The one thing that seems beyond doubt is that cyberbullying is on the rise. A report from the Centers for Disease Control found 50 percent more teens reported being the victims of electronic harassment in 2005 compared to 2000, and as more schools require laptops, and computers and cell phones become a more important part of the daily life of children and teenagers, this trend will surely continue.

Although cyberbullying is still less common than its off-line equivalent, in several ways it's more frightening. Like every phenomenon created by the information revolution, cyberbullying (sometimes called "electronic aggression") is faster and connects more people than off-line activity. Traditional bullying usually happens at school, while cyberbullying can happen anytime and in the privacy of your own home. Likewise, the effects are longer lasting. One of the most common forms of cyberbullying involves spreading rumors about someone. Traditional bullying relied on word of mouth or the proverbial graffiti on the bathroom wall to do this. But word of mouth is limited, and only so many people can read nasty comments scrawled on the stall in the bathroom before the janitor washes it off. Online there is almost no limit to how many people might see a nasty comment, even if is later taken down.

cyberbullying the use of electronic media (web pages, social networking sites, e-mail, instant messengers, and cell phones) to tease, harass, threaten, or humiliate someone

So far, most research has focused on cyberbullying that is perpetrated by someone who knows the victim in real life, but there have always been internet bullies (or "trolls") who seek to abuse people they've never met or only have encountered



Cyberbullying Tina Meier holds two pictures of her daughter Megan, who committed suicide after receiving cruel messages on MySpace.

online. For example, after Megan Meier's suicide, a blog was created called "Megan Had It Coming" and contained posts from a cast of characters who purported to know Megan, all expressing a distinct lack of remorse. Later it was established that the entire blog was really the work of a 32-year-old computer programmer from Seattle with no connection to anyone involved in the case. As more and more of people's lives play out online, this sort of cyberbullying will only become more common.



DATA WORKSHOP

ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Norm Breaking on Television

It's clear that deviance is a fascinating subject not only for sociologists but for television viewers as well. In recent years, shows have begun to feature people breaking every kind of social norm from folkways to taboos. Some obvious examples might include MTV's documentary series *Juvies*, which shows what happens when teens get caught breaking the law and end up in juvenile detention, or A&E's reality series *Dog the Bounty Hunter*, whose criminals are attempting to evade justice. But it's not just documentaries and reality shows that feature deviance. Various other types of programs like crime dramas *Law and Order* or *Criminal Minds*, newsmagazine programs *Dateline NBC* or *48 Hours*, and even comedies such as *Nip/Tuck* or *South Park* regularly deal with the pathological or dysfunctional.

Why is there so much deviance on television? Are these shows merely entertainment, or is something more going on here? When we watch them, do we feel morally superior or get some kind of vicarious thrill? Does the experience reinforce our social norms or serve to break them down?

This Data Workshop asks you to do a content analysis of an existing source, in this case a particular TV show (see Chapter 3 for a review of the research method). You will be documenting the ways in which deviant behavior is portrayed in the show you choose. Choose a show that is on DVD or online, or simply record an episode off TV so that you can watch it multiple times.

Consider the following:

- Who is the intended audience for this program? Why did you choose it?
- What kind of deviance is featured? Give specific examples of situations, scenes, dialogue, or characters, and explain why they are examples of deviance.
- Is the deviance celebrated or condemned?
- How does it make you feel to watch the program?
- What effect do you think the show has on other viewers?
- Do you think the program serves to reinforce or challenge prevailing social norms?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare some written notes that you can refer to in small-group discussions. Compare



Why Is There So Much Deviance on Television? *Dog the Bounty Hunter* and *South Park* portray pathological and dysfunctional characters. What other television shows feature types of deviance? Do you think the programs serve to reinforce or challenge prevailing social norms?

and contrast the analyses of the different programs in your group. What are the similarities and differences between programs?

- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay answering the questions above and reflecting on your own experience in conducting this content analysis. What do you think these shows tell us about contemporary American society and our attitudes toward deviance?

Crime and Punishment

Crime is a particular type of deviance: it is the violation of a norm that has been codified into law, for which you could be arrested and imprisoned. These official, state-backed sanctions can make laws more powerful than nonlegal norms—for example, if you risked arrest for gossiping about your roommate, you might think twice about doing it. "Might," however, is the key word here, for the risk of arrest and jail time does not always deter people from breaking laws. In fact, as we saw earlier, ordinary people break laws every day without really thinking about it (driving faster than the speed limit, drinking while underage, taking pens or pencils home from work). As we also saw earlier, being bad can feel good, and even murder can feel "righteous" at the time, depending on the circumstances (J. Katz 1988).

In the United States, crime is officially measured by the **Uniform Crime Report (UCR)**, the FBI's tabulation of every crime reported by over 17,000 law enforcement agencies in the country. In particular, the UCR is used to track the "crime index," or the eight offenses considered especially reprehensible in our society: murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary (theft inside the home), larceny-theft (of personal property), motor vehicle theft, and arson. The first four are categorized as **violent crime**, while the last four are considered **property crime**. Even though the UCR has been shown to be a flawed system, it is useful in helping to track trends in overall crime as well as particular patterns; it also records the number of arrests made compared with the number of crimes committed, which is the most traditional measure of police effectiveness.

Through the UCR, criminologists are able to make comparisons in crime rates using such variables as year and region. One notable finding is that rates of violent crime declined significantly in the last decade of the twentieth century. The year 1991 saw the highest number of homicides in U.S. history, 24,000. But between 1991 and 2000, there was a dramatic drop of 44 percent in homicide rates, and that number has held steady since then. Other findings include the observation that murder rates peak in the months of July and August. Perhaps related to the influence of heat, they are also higher in the southern states. Murder is committed most frequently by a friend or relative of the victim, seldom by a stranger. Robbery occurs most frequently in urban areas among youth.

Other trends are visible in the UCR as well. Property crimes occur more frequently than violent crime. The most common crime is larceny-theft, with burglary and motor vehicle theft trailing far behind. Although there has also been a decline in rates of property crime over the last decade, it is not as extreme as the drop in violent crime.

crime a violation of a norm that has been codified into law

Uniform Crime Report (UCR) an official measure of crime in the United States, produced by the FBI's official tabulation of every crime reported by over 17,000 law enforcement agencies

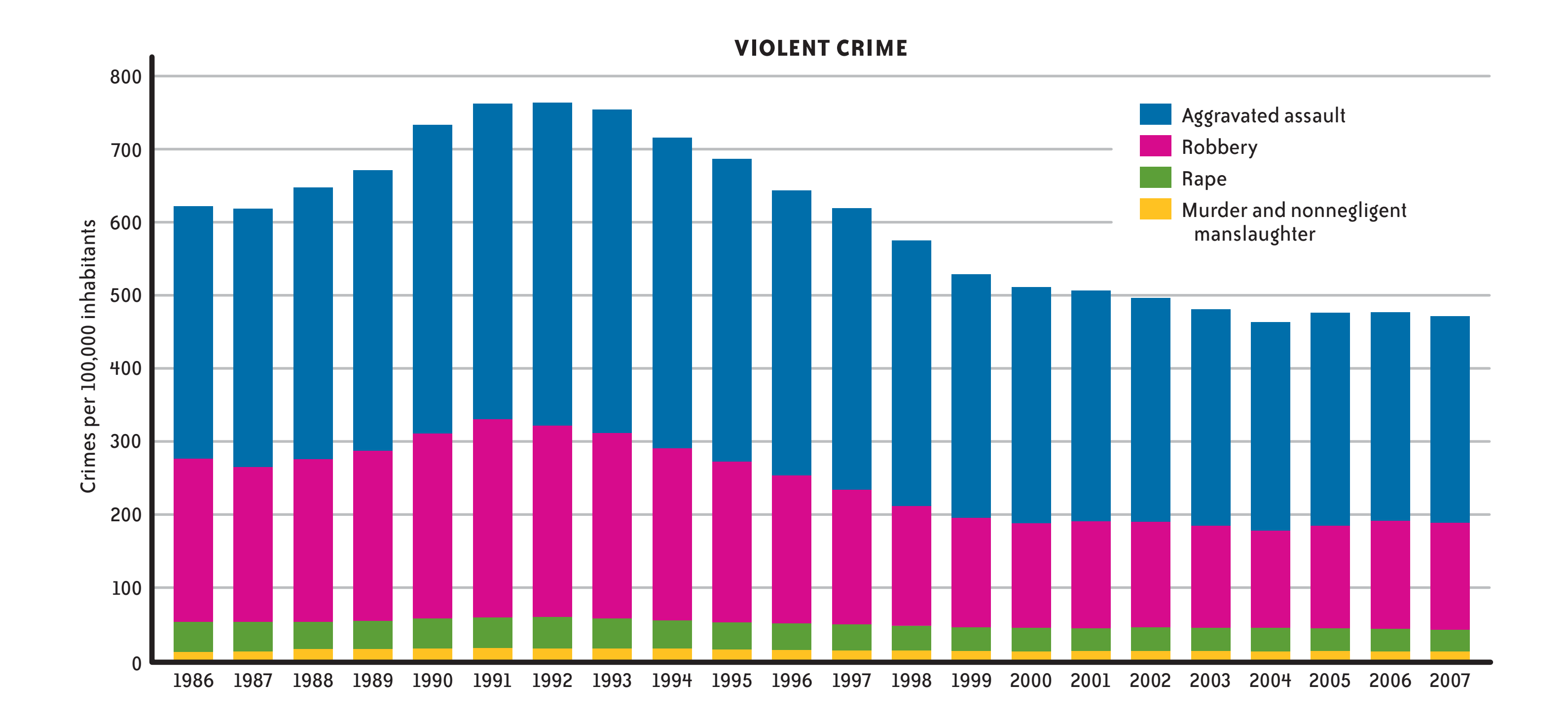
violent crime crimes in which violence is either the objective or the means to an end, including murder, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery

property crime crimes that did not involve violence, including burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson

Crime and Demographics

When criminologists look at quantitative crime data, which provide information on who is more likely to commit or be a victim of crime, they may learn more about the cause of crime. We should, however, question the assumptions and biases of the data. For example, Robert Merton's theory of the self-fulfilling prophecy prompts us to ask, if society has a tendency to cast certain categories of people as criminal types, will this assumption ensure that they will indeed be labeled and treated like criminals? And, as David Matza warns, will our preconceived notions about a category of people influence our interpretations of numerical data? In this section we will look at the relationship between crime and demographics like class, age, gender, and race and examine alternate explanations for what may seem like clear numerical fact.

CLASS Statistics consistently tell us that crime rates are higher in poor urban areas than in wealthier suburbs, but these higher crime rates may not actually be the result of increased criminal behavior. Rather, police tend to concentrate their efforts in urban areas, which they assume are more prone to crime, and thus make more arrests there. It appears that class is more directly related to how citizens are officially treated by the police, courts, and prisons than to which citizens are likely to commit crime. And even if we do accept



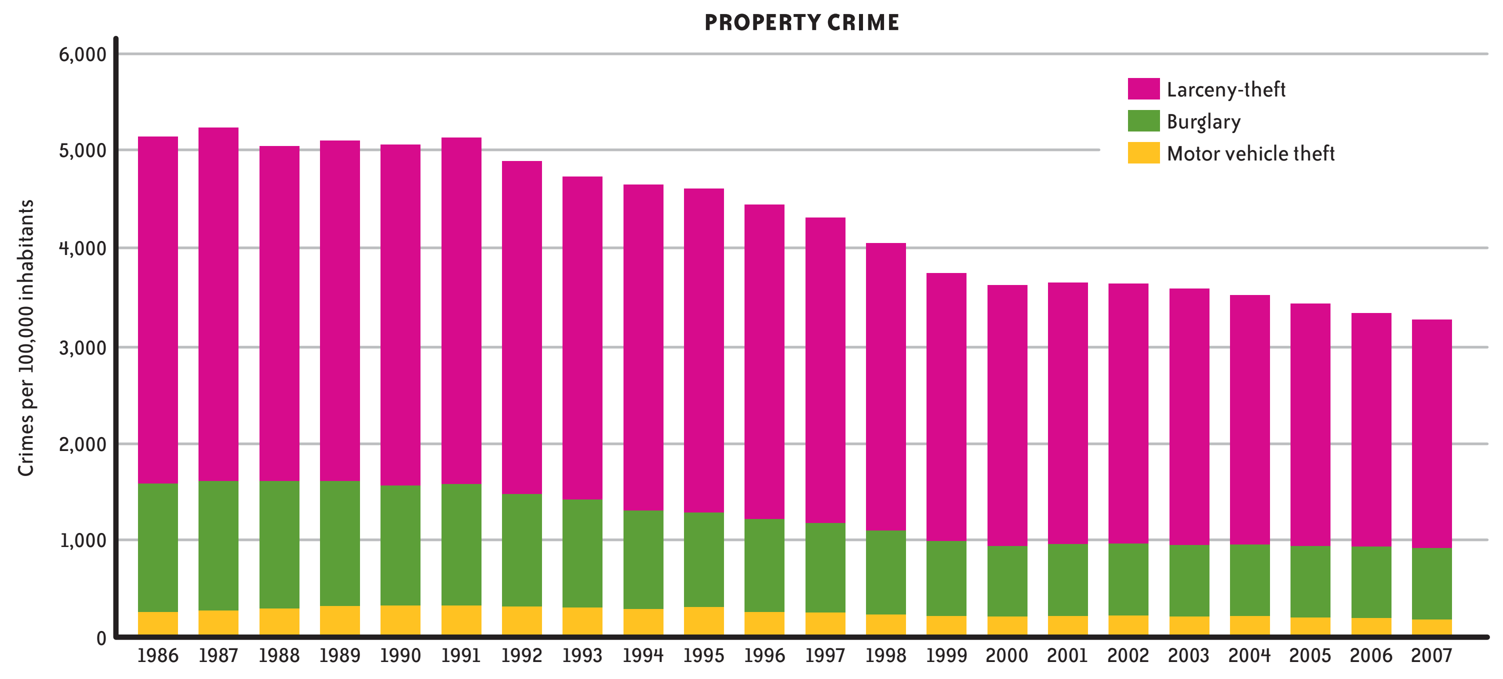


FIGURE 7.2 Crime in the United States, 1986–2007

SOURCE: FBI 2008

white-collar crime crime committed by a high-status individual in the course of her or his occupation

these statistics as an accurate representation of crime rates, theorists such as William Julius Wilson and Robert Sampson (2005) argue that the same factors that cause an area to become economically and socially disadvantaged also encourage criminal activity. Lack of jobs, lack of after-school child care, and lack of good schools, for example, are all factors that can lead to economic strain and criminal activity.

On the other end of the social class spectrum, **white-collar crime** has been defined by sociologist Edwin Sutherland as

On the Job

Is "Cash Register Honesty" Good Enough?

While we might like to think that most employees wouldn't take money from the cash register or merchandise from the showroom floor, wouldn't walk away with a laptop computer, drive away with the company car, or filter sales receipts to their own bank account, employee theft is still a major problem. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that it costs businesses somewhere between $20 and $40 billion a year and accounts for about 30 percent of business failures (INC.com 1999). According to research by Michael Cunningham, a professor of psychology at the University of Louisville and a consultant to the security industry, only one in every three potential employees will be completely trustworthy. Of the other two, one may be tempted to steal given the opportunity, while the other will be more or less constantly looking for a chance to get away with taking company property.

Although we may consider ourselves the trustworthy ones, we may not recognize that our own behavior could still be contributing to the billions of dollars lost each year. How? Well, have you ever taken home paper clips, Post-it notes, a pen, or a pad of paper from the office? Made personal copies on the Xerox machine? Used the company computer to surf the net, download MP3s, play solitaire, or send an e-mail message to a friend? Eaten or drunk company products? How about taking a little more time than you're supposed to on your lunch break or leaving work a little early?

It's called pilfering, and it happens on the job tens of thousands of times a day. And it all adds up. Most companies consider these kinds of losses as just another factor in the cost of doing business. But how is it that so many people think nothing of these small infractions in spite of prevailing social norms that discourage stealing and while otherwise being upstanding or even exemplary employees?

You could say that these people are practicing "cash register honesty." That is, they draw the line at actually stealing money (or its equivalent) out of the till but don't hesitate to make off with other odds and ends that might have a less easily calculable value. They might be appalled at the suggestion that they are less than honest, especially since everyone else seems to take something (if only internet time) now and then. But is this kind of honesty really enough? Perhaps more employees should strive to adhere to a higher standard. Not because they are necessarily going to be caught by the boss or that they individually are costing the company a lot, but because of the inherent satisfaction of knowing that they are doing the right thing.

What kind of honesty do you practice in the workplace?

"a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation." White-collar crime can include fraud, embezzlement, or insider trading and most white-collar criminals come from a relatively privileged background (Shover and Wright 2001).

AGE The younger the population, the more likely its members are to commit crimes. Criminologists have shown that this relationship between age and crime has remained stable since 1935, with the peak age for property crime being 16 and the peak age for violent crime 18. In the United States, 13- to 17-year-olds make up about 6 percent of the population yet account for 25 percent of criminal arrests. On the other end of the spectrum, people 65 and older make up more than 12 percent of the population and account for fewer than 1 percent of arrests. We call this trend of aging out of crime **desistance**. Here too, however, we must be careful about what we read into official statistics. Since our stereotypical image of a criminal is youthful, it may be that the

desistance the tendency of individuals to age out of crime over the life course

public and police are more likely to accuse and arrest young people and less likely to target seniors. In addition, youth may commit more visible crimes (like robbery or assault), while older people may commit crimes that are more difficult to detect, like embezzlement or fraud.

GENDER Males are more likely to commit crime. In fact, males comprise 80 percent of all violent crime arrests. Earlier researchers hypothesized that the gender difference in crime rates was based on physical, emotional, and psychological differences between men and women. The logic was that women were too weak, passive, or unintelligent to commit crime. This argument has been replaced by a focus on the social and economic roles of women. Starting in the 1970s, criminologists found that lower crime rates among women could be explained by their lower status in the power hierarchy. Conflict theorists such as James Messerschmidt (1993) argued that once women start gaining power in the labor market through education and income, crime rates among women will rise to more closely match those among men. This hypothesis has been largely supported by recent trends. Between 1992 and 2002, male arrest rates decreased by 4 percent, while female arrest rates increased by almost 18 percent. So while at first glance it may seem logical to argue that women's crime rates are lower because of biology, on closer examination, we see that social structure plays an important role.

RACE The relationship between race and crime is a controversial one. According to the UCR, African Americans make up 12 percent of the U.S. population but account for 37 percent of violent crimes and 31 percent of property crimes. Once again, sociologists caution against making a link between biology and criminal activity. Instead, they maintain that the relationship can be explained by Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy and by class variables. For example, we could hypothesize that African Americans are exposed to higher rates of crime because more of them live in lower-class neighborhoods—and that here, it is class that matters more than race.

deterrence an approach to punishment that relies on the threat of harsh penalties to discourage people from committing crimes

retribution an approach to punishment that emphasizes retaliation or revenge for the crime as the appropriate goal

incapacitation an approach to punishment that seeks to protect society from criminals by imprisoning or executing them

rehabilitation an approach to punishment that attempts to reform criminals as part of their penalty

criminal justice system a collection of social institutions such as legislatures, police, courts, and prisons, which create and enforce laws

capital punishment the death penalty

Deterrence and Punishment

The question of **deterrence** is part of an ongoing debate about our criminal laws. Theorists who maintain that offenders carefully calculate the cost and benefits of each crime argue that punishment has a deterrent effect—that if the punishment seems too severe, people won't commit the crime. That's the logic behind California's controversial "three strikes" law: the punishment for three felonies is an automatic life sentence. While deterrence theory seems practical enough, it is important to note that in matters of sociology, seldom is there such a direct and causal link between two factors—in this case, the cost of punishment vs. the benefit of the crime.

Other justifications for punishment include **retribution**—the notion that society has the right to "get even"—and **incapacitation**, the notion that criminals should be confined or even executed to protect society from further injury. Some argue, though, that society should focus not on deterrence but on **rehabilitation**: the prison system should try to reform the criminal so that once released, he will not commit the same crimes again. Each approach to punishment invokes different ideas about who the criminal is and what his relationship is to the larger society: Is he someone who can plan ahead and curb his illegal behavior so as not to face a possible negative outcome? Is she someone who can work toward personal transformation? Is he someone who must be punished quid pro quo? Or should she just be removed from society permanently?

In the United States, the local, state, and federal government bureaucracies responsible for making laws together with the police, courts, and prison systems make up the **criminal justice system**—a system that, like any other social institution, reflects the society in which it operates. This means that the American criminal justice system, while it provides important benefits such as social control and even employment for its workers, also replicates some of the inequalities of power in our society.

In 2003, for example, 17 inmates on Illinois's death row were found to be innocent of the crimes for which they had been sentenced to die; some cases involved errors made by overworked or underqualified defense attorneys. Further, more than two-thirds of the inmates were African American, many of them convicted by all-white juries (Ryan 2003). As a result, then-governor George Ryan became convinced that **capital punishment** was unfairly and even wrongly applied in some cases, and he suspended the death penalty altogether. When inequities and errors such as these exist in the criminal justice system, we must question the true meaning of the word *justice* in our society.

“Positive” Deviance?

Are there instances in which a rule violation is actually a principled act that should generate a positive rather than negative reaction? The next two examples are cases of what we might call **positive deviance**. Both individuals broke laws; in hindsight, they are now considered heroes.

The first example is the simple act of civil disobedience by Rosa Parks on December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, an act often considered pivotal in launching the Civil Rights Movement. In those days, a Montgomery city ordinance required buses to be segregated: whites sat in front and blacks in the back. Rosa Parks defied the law by refusing to give up her front seat to a white man and move to the back. Her arrest galvanized the black community and triggered a bus boycott and subsequent protests that eventually ended segregation in the South. It is worth recognizing that Parks was not an accidental symbol; she was an experienced activist. In her one small, courageous act of defiance, she served as a catalyst that eventually helped advance the fight against racial discrimination all across America. More than 50 years after the day she had taken her seat on the bus, Parks was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. When she died in 2005, it was front-page news. Her funeral was attended by luminaries of all types and races: mayors, members of Congress, presidents, CEOs, clergy, celebrities, and as many others as could fit into the packed church.

positive deviance actions considered deviant within a given context but which are later reinterpreted as appropriate or even heroic

The second example is the story of three soldiers who put a stop to a massacre during the Vietnam War. On March 16, 1968, the men of Charlie Company, a U.S. battalion under the command of Lieutenant William Calley, stormed into the village of My Lai in South Vietnam on a “search and destroy” mission and opened fire on its civilian inhabitants. The boys and men of the village had gone to tend the fields, leaving only unarmed women, children, and the elderly. Hundreds were killed on that terrible day, in direct violation of military law. Although the soldiers should have ceased fire when they saw that the enemy (members of the Viet Cong) was not present, they obeyed the commands of their leaders and continued ravaging the village. Calley was later convicted in a court-martial; his men, claiming that they were only “following orders,” were not held responsible.

The massacre would have continued unchecked had it not been for three other American soldiers—Hugh Thompson, Lawrence Colburn, and Glenn Andreota—who flew their helicopter into the middle of the carnage at My Lai, against the orders of their superiors, and called for back-up help to airlift dozens of survivors to safety. They then turned their guns on their fellow Americans, threatening to shoot if they tried to harm any more villagers. For years, the army tried to cover up the three men’s heroism in order to keep the whole ugly truth of My Lai a secret. But finally, in 1998, the men were recognized for their bravery with medals and citations—for having had the courage and skill to perform a perilous rescue and the moral conviction necessary to defy authority as well.



Positive Deviance In his eulogy at Rosa Parks’s funeral, Senator Ted Kennedy said, “When Rosa Parks sat down half a century ago, America stood up. Her quiet fight for equality sounded the bells of freedom for millions and awakened the moral conscience of the nation. We will always remember that great December when Rosa Parks sat alone so that others could sit together.”

Closing Comments

The sociological study of crime and deviance raises complicated issues of morality and ethics. When we study sensitive topics like rape and alcoholism or vulnerable populations like juvenile delinquents and the mentally ill, we have a responsibility as scholars to recognize the effects our attention may have on the people we study. As David Matza noted, we must try to eschew moral judgments in our work, no matter how difficult that may be. And as our professional

code of ethics demonstrates, we must protect the people we study from any negative outcomes. Groups lodged under the rubric of deviance can be disempowered by this label, and policy decisions made on the basis of social science research may further injure an already marginal group. On the other hand, a sociological perspective on deviance and crime provides for the possibility that groups previously labeled and marginalized may someday receive assistance and legitimacy from the larger society as well. The sociological perspective is a powerful tool.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **Defining Deviance** Deviance does not reside in the characteristics of activities, but in the reaction when an activity violates a norm; the term *deviant*, as used by sociologists, is always a social judgment and never a moral one. The definition of deviance varies widely across cultures and times and not just in terms of which acts are considered criminal. The way we modify our bodies, select our foods, and even punish criminals is very different around the world as well as in the past.

- **Theories of Deviance** Several theoretical perspectives attempt to explain deviance. Functionalists argue that deviance serves a positive social function by clarifying moral boundaries and promoting social cohesion. Structural strain theory argues that while each society has normative goals for its members, social inequalities create strain or tension in people who lack socially acceptable means to achieve those goals. This strain can cause individuals to reject socially approved goals, socially approved means of achieving those goals, or both.

- Conflict theorists believe that a society's inequalities are reproduced in its definitions of deviance, so that less powerful groups and individuals are more likely to be criminalized. Symbolic interactionist theories of deviance focus on how interpersonal relations and everyday interactions shape definitions of deviance and influence those who engage in deviant behavior. Differential association theory argues that we learn to be deviant through our interactions with rule-breakers. Labeling theory focuses on the consequences of considering an individual or act deviant, arguing that the act of labeling someone deviant can make it so. In this way labels serve as self-fulfilling prophecies, as our expectations greatly influence social outcomes.

- **Stigma and Deviant Identity** An individual branded as deviant has been stigmatized; his identity has been "spoiled" by the deviant label, and he or she may be treated poorly. Passing, or concealing stigmatizing information, is one way that some people manage their marginalized status. Some stigmas, however, may be difficult or impossible to conceal. As a result, some stigmatized people embrace their identities while rejecting the notion that those identities are deviant. However, not everyone identified as deviant rejects that label—in fact, some people welcome being characterized as deviant and use that label to align themselves with a particular group or culture.

- **Studying Deviance** Sociologists have often focused on the most obvious forms of deviance—criminals, the mentally handicapped, and sexual deviants—because of deeply rooted social bias in favor of the norms of the powerful. David Matza suggests that researchers overcome this bias through a naturalistic approach in which they set aside preconceptions and focus on the diversity and complexity of the social worlds they study.

- **The Foreground of Deviance** Most sociological perspectives on deviance focus on the aspects of an individual's background that would predispose her to become deviant. In contrast, Jack Katz, who examines the emotional components of crime and deviance, argues that the in-the-moment experience of deviant behavior can be emotionally seductive. Katz argues that researchers can better understand crime by considering how criminals experience their acts of deviance.

- **Crime and Punishment** Crime is the violation of officially codified social norms (laws). In the United States, the Uniform Crime Report, collected by the FBI, allows sociologists to study the relationship between crime and demographics like class, age, gender, and race. While these statistics are valuable, it is also important

to remember the ways they may be biased. For example, people often assume a high correlation between poverty and crime because crime rates are higher in poor areas. However, this disparity may have more to do with the way the police and the judicial system enforce the law.

- There is an ongoing debate about the role of punishment in the criminal justice system. Those who believe in deterrence assume that harsh penalties will discourage crime. When crimes occur some favor rehabilitation, to reform the criminal, while others advocate retribution or incapacitation.
- **Positive Deviance** Although most of the acts of deviance discussed in this chapter are generally considered harmful, without some forms of deviance, social change would be next to impossible. Given the rapid pace of change in recent history, it is hard to imagine what our social world would look like without certain acts of deviance that, sometimes after they were committed, were accepted as righteous and heroic.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Years ago, it was considered deviant in the United States for women to wear pants and for men to wear jewelry like earrings. Today, both are common. What did these notions of deviance say about American norms? What does the fact that these "deviant" behaviors are now normal say about the nature of deviance?
2. There are many ways to be mildly deviant without breaking any laws. How do we sanction minor deviant acts?
3. Think of the last act of deviance you committed and describe how the different sociological theories of deviance would explain it. Which theory fits best, and why?
4. Every cultural group maintains different standards for body modification, and in our society these change rapidly. What kinds of body modification that seem normal to you would appear deviant to your parents or grandparents?
5. Symbolic interactionist theories of deviance focus on the way that interpersonal relationships and everyday interactions shape definitions of deviance. Did you ever find yourself doing deviant things because of your friends? What theory describes this pathway to deviance?
6. Howard Becker's labeling theory focuses on how judgments of deviance are made and the consequences of labeling an individual deviant. Have you witnessed people being labeled as deviant? If so, did the label stick?
7. Have you ever known someone to reject the "deviant" label and turn his negative identity into a positive one? What was the deviant identity? What term describes this sort of deviance?
8. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of passing? Are there ways in which you pass? What effect do you think passing has on those who disguise their stigmatized identities?
9. Under what circumstances might a person choose to label himself or herself as deviant? Discuss some situations in which deviance avowal is a useful strategy.
10. Provide a real-life example of positive deviance (other than the ones described in the chapter). What norms were violated? What was the outcome? Does your belief system affect whether you perceive this deviance as positive? (How might someone else have viewed it as negative?)

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Barthelme, Frederick, and Steven Barthelme. 2001. *Double Down: Reflections on Gambling and Loss*. San Diego, CA: Harvest/HBJ Books. A remarkable memoir of a gambling problem that cost the two brothers $250,000 in just a few years. The book explores the personal appeal of gambling and explains the social changes that allowed riverboat gambling to return to Mississippi.

Becker, Howard S. 1953. "Becoming a Marihuana User." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 59 (November): 235–243. Describes the way that deviant behaviors are learned, in terms of both practical technique and learned enjoyment. Becker argues that deviance should not be explained away through preexisting psychological traits but rather should be understood as learned though experience.

Cohen, Rob, and David Wollock. 2001. *Etiquette for Outlaws*. New York: Harper Paperbacks. This book and the website www.etiquetteforoutlaws.com provide a rather racy field guide to contemporary deviance detailing the unspoken rules and proper manners for engaging in numerous deviant behaviors, including gambling, smoking, drinking, stripping, fighting, and other vices.

Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage. Analyzes the ways that changing social structures lead to changes in the nature of punishment, which has tended away from public torture and toward private imprisonment. Be warned, though, the first

chapter describes an execution in France in 1775 that would be considered horribly deviant today!

Grand Theft Auto. Rockstar Games. A video game series in which the player controls a character in the employ of organized crime. Throughout the game, the player is rewarded for committing deviant and criminal acts. (Warning: Some of these are rated Mature.) What does this game say about societal norms and deviance? How do video games affect players?

Hegi, Ursula. 1995. *Stones from the River*. New York: Simon & Schuster. The story of Trudi Montag, a dwarf living in Germany in the 1930s and 40s. Trudi's village is home to many unusual characters, including her mentally ill mother, her cross-dressing friend, and her Jewish neighbors—but the Nazis see only some of these people as "undesirable." The story addresses views of "deviance" and "normalcy" during a horrific time in German history.

The Human Stain. 2004. Dir. Robert Benton. Miramax. This film is based on Philip Roth's best-selling book of the same title. Anthony Hopkins plays a classics professor who is hiding a deep secret about his racial background and is forced to retire under false charges of racism.

Larsen, Nella, and Thadious M. Davis. 1997. *Passing*. New York: Penguin. A story about a black woman passing for white and living the high life in Chicago and New York in the 1930s, this book shows the perils of losing one's carefully constructed false identity.

Menzel, Peter, and Faith D'Aluisio. 1998. *Man Eating Bugs: The Art and Science of Eating Insects*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press. A humorous take on the eating habits of diverse cultures that describes such tasty dishes as fried tarantula and Simple Scorpion Soup.

Pileggi, Nicholas. 1985. *Wiseguy*. New York: Pocket Books. An account of the criminal career of Henry Hill, whose life in the mob ended when he entered the witness protection program. This book includes lots of interviews with Hill and helps explain the appeal of criminal acts, as distinct from the appeal of their reward. It later became the basis for the movie *GoodFellas*.

Twitch and Shout. 1995. Dir. Laurel Chiten. Fanlight Productions/New Day Films. A compassionate, disturbing, and even humorous documentary about Tourette's syndrome. Chiten's film examines how Tourette's sufferers deal with a neurological disorder that causes physical and vocal tics: they may jerk, blink, moan, or shout words uncontrollably. In a society that values self-control, Tourette's sufferers are often stigmatized because of these disruptive, involuntary behaviors.

PART III Understanding Inequality



All societies have systems for grouping, ranking, and categorizing people, and within any social structure, some people occupy superior positions and others hold inferior positions. While such distinctions may appear to be natural, emanating from real differences between people, they are actually social constructions. Society has created and given meaning to concepts such as class, race, and gender, and as such, they have taken on great social significance. The social analyst's job is to understand how these categories are established in the first place, how they are maintained or changed, and ways they affect society and the lives of individuals.

For instance, sociologist Mitchell Duneier's book *Sidewalk* (1999) includes the story of a marginalized group of New York City street-vendors whose lives and social identities are much more complex than the casual passerby might imagine. The story considers the convergence of class (Chapter 8), race (Chapter 9), and gender (Chapter 10) in the social structure of the city and its inhabitants' everyday interactions. In many ways, *Sidewalk* brings together the themes of these next three chapters.

Duneier studied men and women who live on the streets of New York's Greenwich Village, selling used goods—mostly books and magazines—to passersby. Duneier befriended the vendors and became part of their curbside culture for five years, during which he conducted his ethnographic research. By examining the intersecting lives of people who frequent the Village, Duneier shows what social inequality looks like and feels like and what it means to those who live with it every day. On Sixth Avenue, the class differences between the vendors and their customers are obvious. The vendors live from day to day in a cash-based, informal economy; they are poor and often "unhoused"; most are African American males; some are educated, others are not; and all have stories of how they became part of the sidewalk culture. The passersby, on the other hand, are of all ages, races, and occupations, and they are likely to be both employed and housed. They are often well-educated; some are wealthy. Interactions between these vendors and customers cut across boundaries of both class and race, and sometimes gender—all interrelated forms of social inequality.

A key insight in Duneier's work is that the street vendors are not necessarily what they seem at first glance. It would be easy to characterize these people as lacking any social aspirations, given that so many are homeless and don't fit into conventional social roles. Though they might offend some by their appearance, few are drug addicts, alcoholics, or criminals—and they are pursuing the same kinds of goals as many of the passersby. In this liberal neighborhood, sales of written material are allowed on the streets without permits or fees, thus providing these marginalized citizens an opportunity for entrepreneurial activity and a chance to earn an honest living. Most vendors say they are trying "to live 'better' lives within the framework of their own and society's weaknesses" (p. 172). Most work hard to construct a sense of decency and reputability in their dealings with customers. Although some of them violate social norms, in most ways the vendors adhere to a code of conduct that minimizes any negative impact they might have on the surrounding community.

Many vendors develop friendly, ongoing relations with regular buyers despite their different positions in social status hierarchies. Sometimes, however, the chasm between





the vendors and their customers is difficult to bridge. For example, the male vendors in Duneier's study regularly engaged in flirtatious banter with female passersby. Their efforts at engaging the women in interactions brought a fleeting sense of entitlement and power to men who otherwise have few resources. Typically, the vendors were ignored or rebuffed by the women. When asked why this was the case, one of the vendors said, "She wants room and board, clothing, makeup, hairdos, fabulous dinners, and rent" (Duneier 1999, p. 196). In other words, because he is poor, he cannot provide these upper-middle-class amenities. The women, however, may perceive this behavior as sexual harassment, and accordingly may use standard streetwise avoidance techniques. Here social class becomes the great divide in everyday gender relations.

Some people oppose the street vendors' presence in the neighborhood, and they are frequently the target of anti-peddling campaigns by the mayor's office, police, and local businesses. Yet Duneier believes that expelling these street vendors in an effort to improve the neighborhood would actually be counterproductive. Without the unconventional form of employment that street vending provides to these otherwise destitute people, there would likely be more crime, panhandling, and deviance. Moreover, as law-abiding citizens with a strong desire to conform to social norms, the vendors often serve as mentors to other homeless people, easing them back into mainstream society. Duneier contends that street vendors are an asset to the area and that they contribute to the vibrancy and health of the Village.

While the study is particularly focused on New York's Sixth Avenue vendors, it provides insights into the structure of difference and social inequality in the United States, showing that interactionist perspectives can also be relevant to the study of class, race, and gender, which are more often examined through macrosociological theories. What we come to learn is that the world of sidewalk vending is highly complex and organized, with its own rules and social order.





CHAPTER 8

Social Class: The Structure of Inequality

The photographs on the next page show average families from six different countries—the United States, Kuwait, Mali, Bhutan, Argentina, and Albania. They are each pictured outside the family home, with all their worldly goods displayed around them. These pictures, from Peter Menzel's book *Material World: A Global Family Portrait*, clearly illustrate some of the inequalities of wealth and power between societies worldwide.

Compare, for example, the U.S. and Albanian families, the Skeens and the Cakonis. What are the differences between these families as evidenced in their possessions? The two Skeen children have their own bedrooms; the four Cakoni kids sleep together on a couch in the kitchen. The Cakonis own a number of working animals: a donkey for transportation and goats, cows, and chickens to provide milk, meat, and eggs. In contrast, the Skeens have a pet dog and several stuffed deer heads hanging on the wall, trophies of Mr. Skeen's favorite pastime, hunting. Every two weeks, the Cakonis hike seven miles to the nearest town to shop for groceries; Mrs. Skeen drives her minivan to a suburban supermarket to stock up whenever she wants. The Skeens have three radios, three stereos, five telephones, two televisions, a VCR, a computer, and three different vehicles; the Cakonis own one radio and one television, which the family considers its most valued possession.

Similar comparisons may be made between the Natoma family in Mali, the Namgay family in Bhutan, the Carballo family in Argentina, and the Abdulla family in Kuwait. The younger Mrs. Natoma carries water from the village well in a bucket balanced on her head; the Abdullas have a private indoor swimming pool. The Carballos have been robbed several times, and Mr. Carballo loads his gun every night at dusk to protect his family; the Namgays own little and live near a Buddhist monastery where monks chant daily for peace. These photographs reveal stark contrasts between the world's wealthiest citizens in places like the United States and Kuwait and its poorest people in countries like Albania and Bhutan. What are the real meanings of terms like *rich* and *poor*, and how do sociologists define them?

SocIndex

Then and Now

1912: When the *Titanic* sinks, 60% of the first-class passengers survive, 40% of the second-class, and 25% of the third-class

2006: Low-income Americans who live in wealthy neighborhoods suffer mortality rates that are almost three times higher than their rich neighbors

Here and There

United States: Rank of affluence among world nations in 2007: 15; average per capita income: $46,040

Ethiopia: Rank of affluence among world nations in 2007: 196; average per capita income in U.S. dollars: $780

This and That

The top 10% of the world's population earn more than 50% of the world's total income, or about $25,400 annually per person

The bottom 10% of the world's population earn less than 1% of the world's total income, or about $400 annually per person



Family Portraits From the top left: the Skeens (Pearland, Texas), the Cakonis (Bei Burrel, Albania), the Natomas (Kouakourou, Mali), the Namgays (Shingkhey, Bhutan), the Carballos (Salta, Argentina), and the Abdullas (Kuwait City, Kuwait).

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter, we will examine, from a sociological perspective, the stratification that occurs in all human societies. Despite rhetorical claims about equality of opportunity for all, America is a profoundly hierarchical society, with the benefits and opportunities of living here unequally distributed among its citizens. A sociological perspective on stratification will increase your understanding in several important ways. First, it will help you to see inequities in places you may have overlooked, such as your own town, neighborhood, and school. Second, it will help you consider how positions in social hierarchies tend to shape the lives of individuals: access to health care, the justice system, employment, and housing are all governed by structures of inequality. Third, it should enable you to identify your own place in these social arrangements and to see how some of your own life chances have been shaped by your position (or your family's position) in certain hierarchies. Finally, a knowledge of stratification may help you play a role in changing systems of inequality. Look for ways that you can alleviate some of the problems that social inequality causes—if you can have an impact, even a small one, then this chapter will not have been in vain!

Social Stratification and Social Inequality

Social stratification in one form or another is present in all societies. This means that members of a given society are categorized and divided into groups, which are then placed in a social hierarchy. Members may be grouped according to their gender, race, class, age, or other characteristic, depending on whatever criteria are important to that society. Some groups will be ranked higher in the social strata (levels), while others will fall into the lower ranks. The higher-level groups enjoy more access to the rewards and resources within that society, leaving lower-level groups with less.

This unequal distribution of wealth, power, and prestige results in what is called **social inequality**. We find several different systems of stratification operating in the United States, where it is not hard to demonstrate that being wealthy, white, or male typically confers a higher status (and all that goes along with it) on a person than does being poor, nonwhite, or female. Because social inequality affects a person's life experience so profoundly, it is worthwhile to examine how stratification works.

There are four basic principles of social stratification. First, it is a characteristic of a society, rather than a reflection of individual differences. For instance, if we say that in Japan men rank higher in the social hierarchy than women, this doesn't mean that a particular woman, such as actress Ryoko Hirosue, couldn't attain a higher status than a particular man; it means only that in Japan as a whole, men rank higher. Second, social stratification persists over generations. In Great Britain, a child inherits not only physical characteristics such as race but also other indicators of class standing such as regional accent. It is because of this principle of stratification that wealthy families remain so through many generations.

Third, while all societies stratify their members, different societies use different criteria for ranking them. For instance, the criterion in industrialized nations is material wealth (social class), but in hunter-gatherer societies, such as the Khoisan Bushmen of southern Africa, who are egalitarian, it is gender. Fourth, social stratification is maintained through beliefs that are widely shared by members of society. In the United States, it is still common to think that people are poor not only because of the existing class structure but also because they have somehow failed to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps."

Systems of Stratification

In order to better understand social stratification, it is useful to examine different historical periods and to make global comparisons across cultures. So here we look at three major systems of stratification: slavery, caste, and social class.

Slavery

Slavery, the most extreme system of social stratification, relegates people to the status of property, mainly for the purpose of providing labor for the slave owner. Slaves can thus be bought and sold like any other commodity. They aren't paid for their labor and in fact are forced to work under mental or physical threat. Occupying the lowest rank in the social hierarchy, slaves have none of the rights common to free members of the same societies in which they live.

Slavery has been practiced since the earliest times (the Bible features stories of

social stratification the division of society into groups arranged in a social hierarchy

social inequality the unequal distribution of wealth, power, or prestige among members of a society

slavery the most extreme form of social stratification, based on the legal ownership of people

the Israelites as slaves) and has continued for millennia in South America, Europe, and the United States. Sometimes the race, nationality, or religion of the slave owners was the same as the slaves', as was the case in ancient Greece and Rome. Historically, a person could become enslaved in one of several ways. One way was through debt; a person who couldn't repay what he owed might be taken into slavery by his creditor. Another way was through warfare: groups of vanquished soldiers might become slaves to the victors, and the women and children of the losing side could also be taken into slavery. A person who was caught committing a crime could become a slave as a kind of punishment and as a means of compensating the victim. And some slaves were captured and kidnapped, as was the case of the transatlantic slave trade from Africa to the Americas.

Slavery as an economic system was profitable for the slave owner. In most systems of slavery, people were slaves for life, doing work in agriculture, construction, mining, or domestic service, and sometimes in the military, industry, or commerce. Their children would become slaves too, thus making the owner a greater profit. In some systems, however, slavery was temporary, and some slaves could buy their own freedom.

Slavery is now prohibited by every nation in the world, as declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Not only is it illegal, it is considered immoral as well. Nevertheless, the shocking fact is that it continues to exist today in such places as India, South Asia, and West Africa in the form of child slavery, serfdom, forced and bonded laborers, human trafficking, and sex slaves. Using a somewhat broader definition of slavery, some have estimated that there are 25 million people in slavery today, more than at any other time in human history (Bales 2000).

Caste

Caste represents another type of social stratification found in various parts of the world. The traditional **caste system** is based on heredity, whereby whole groups of people are born into a certain stratum. Castes may be differentiated along religious, economic, or political lines, as well as by skin color or other physical characteristics. The caste system creates a highly stratified society where there is little or no chance of a person changing her position within the hierarchy, no matter what she may achieve individually. Members must marry within their own group, and their caste ranking is passed on to their children. In general, members of higher-ranking castes tend to be more prosperous, whereas members of lower-ranking castes tend to have fewer material resources and may live in abject poverty and suffer discrimination.

caste system a form of social stratification in which status is determined by one's family history and background and cannot be changed

apartheid the system of segregation of racial and ethnic groups that was legal in South Africa between 1948 and 1991

India is the country most closely associated with the caste system, based there in the Hindu (majority) religion. The caste system ranks individuals into one of five categories: Brahman (scholars and priests), ksatriya or chhetri (rulers and warriors), vaisya (merchants and traders), sudra (farmers, artisans, and laborers), and the untouchables (social outcasts). The caste system is a reflection of what Hindus call *karma*, the complex moral law of cause and effect that governs the universe (S. P. Cohen 2001). According to this belief, membership in a particular caste is seen as a well-deserved reward or punishment for virtuous or sinful behavior in a past life. Caste is thus considered a spiritual rather than material status. Caste-related segregation and discrimination were prohibited in 1949 by India's constitution, but they are still prevalent. Resistance to social change remains, and thus far the social ramifications of the caste system have not been completely dismantled.

THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA An interesting example of the caste system was the **apartheid** system, a legal separation of racial and ethnic groups that was enforced between 1948 and 1991 in South Africa. The term itself literally means "apartness" in Afrikaans and Dutch. The consequence of apartheid was to create great disparity among those in the different strata of society.

South Africans were legally classified into four main racial groups: white (English and Dutch heritage), Indian (from India), "colored" (mixed race) and black. Blacks formed a large majority, at 60 percent of the population. These groups were geographically and socially separated from one another. Blacks were forcibly removed from almost 80 percent of the country, which was reserved for the three minority groups, and relocated to independent "homelands" similar to the Indian reservations in the United States. They could not enter other parts of the country without a pass—usually in order to work as "guest laborers" in white areas. Ironically, African Americans visiting South Africa were given "honorary white" status and could move freely within white and nonwhite areas. Social services for whites and nonwhites were separate as well: schools, hospitals, buses, trains, parks, beaches, libraries, theaters, public restrooms, and even graveyards were segregated. Indians and "coloreds" were also discriminated against, though they usually led slightly more privileged lives than blacks. Despite claims of "separate but equal," the standard of living among whites far exceeded that of any other group.

In South Africa under the apartheid system, whites held all the political, economic, and social power. It was not long

until civil unrest and resistance to the system began developing within South Africa and among the international community. Blacks and even some whites began to organize to wage strikes and demonstrations, and sanctions were imposed by Western nations. The plights of high-profile antiapartheid leaders such as Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela became known worldwide. Pressure on the white government continued to grow, until the country was in an almost constant state of emergency. In 1991, apartheid as a legal institution was finally abolished.

Its legacy, however, has been much more difficult to dismantle. Although nonwhites now share the same rights and privileges as whites, social inequality and discrimination between the races have decreased little (Nattras and Seekings 2001; Seekings and Nattras 2005). South Africa remains a country with one of the most unequal distributions of income in the world. In 2004, 60 percent earned less than $7,000 U.S. a year, whereas just over 2 percent earned more than $50,000 per year. Blacks made up 90 percent of the poor. The restoration of land seized during apartheid is only slowly being accomplished and at a price to those making claims. In some ways, new patterns of class stratification are replacing rather than erasing old patterns of racial stratification.

Social Class

Social class, a system of stratification practiced primarily in capitalist societies, ranks groups of people according to their wealth, property, power, and prestige. It is also referred to by sociologists as **socioeconomic status (SES)**. The social class system is much less rigid than the caste system. Although children tend to "inherit" the social class of their parents, over the course of a lifetime they can move up or down levels in the strata. Strictly speaking, social class is not based on race, ethnicity, gender, or age, although, as we will learn later, there is often an overlap between class and those other variables.

Sociologists are not always in agreement about what determines class standing or where the boundaries are between different social classes. We will consider some of these disagreements after first taking a look at the United States and its system.

Social Classes in the United States

It is difficult to draw exact lines between the social classes in the United States; in fact, it may be useful to imagine them along a continuum rather than strictly divided. The most commonly identified categories are upper class, middle class, and lower class. If we want to make even finer distinctions, the middle class can also be divided into upper, middle, and lower (Wright et al. 1982). You probably have some idea of which class you belong to even if you don't know the exact definition for each category. Interestingly, most Americans claim that they belong somewhere in the middle class even when their life experience and backgrounds would suggest otherwise. While keeping in mind that the borders between the classes can be blurry, let's examine a typical model of the five different social classes.

social class a system of stratification based on access to resources such as wealth, property, power, and prestige

socioeconomic status (SES) a measure of an individual's place within a social class system; often used interchangeably with "class"

upper class a largely self-sustaining group of the wealthiest people in a class system; in the United States they constitute about 1 percent of the population and possess most of the wealth of the country

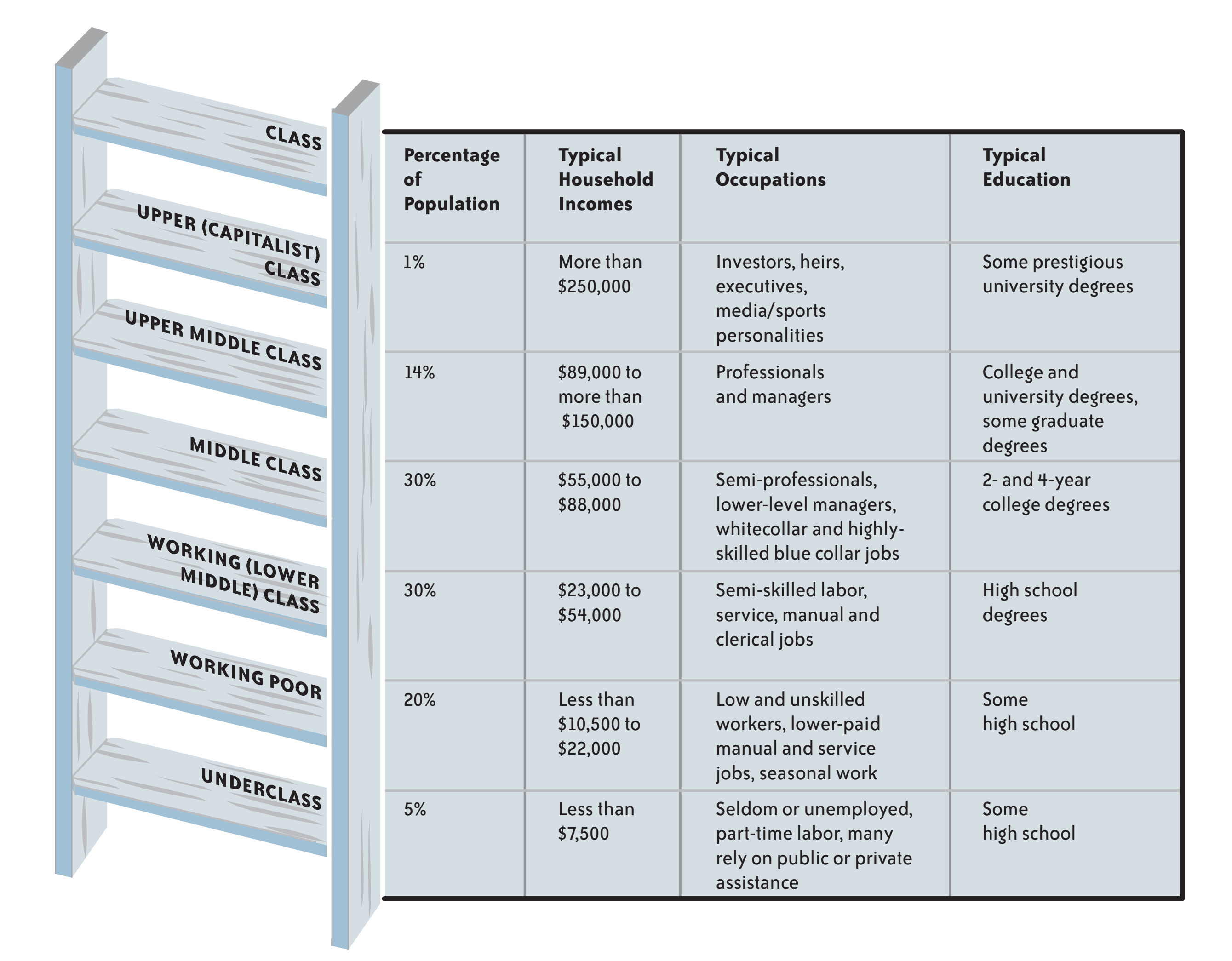
upper-middle class mostly professionals and managers, who enjoy considerable financial stability; they constitute about 14 percent of the U.S. population

The Upper Class

The **upper class** makes up just 1 percent of the U.S. population, and its total net worth is greater than that of the entire other 99 percent (Beeghley 2005). The upper class consists of elites who have gained membership in various ways. Some, like the Rockefellers and Carnegies, come into "old money" through family fortunes; others, like Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey, generate "new money" through individual achievements. Members of this class earn in excess of $250,000 per year and are often highly educated, cultured, and influential. They tend to attend private schools and prestigious universities and display a distinctive lifestyle; some seek positions of power in government or philanthropy. The upper class is largely self-sustaining, with most members remaining stable and few new ones able to gain its ranks.

The Upper-Middle Class

The **upper-middle class** comprises about 14 percent of the population. This group tends to be well educated (with college or postgraduate degrees) and highly skilled. Members work primarily in executive, managerial, and professional jobs. They may enjoy modest support from investments but generally depend on income from salaried work, making upward of $89,000 to $150,000 per year. As a result, the upper-middle class is most likely to feel some financial stability. They usually own their homes and may own a second one as well.



Class	Percentage of Population	Typical Household Incomes	Typical Occupations	Typical Education
UPPER (CAPITALIST) CLASS	1%	More than $250,000	Investors, heirs, executives, media/sports personalities	Some prestigious university degrees
UPPER MIDDLE CLASS	14%	$89,000 to more than $150,000	Professionals and managers	College and university degrees, some graduate degrees
MIDDLE CLASS	30%	$55,000 to $88,000	Semi-professionals, lower-level managers, whitecollar and highly-skilled blue collar jobs	2- and 4-year college degrees
WORKING (LOWER MIDDLE) CLASS	30%	$23,000 to $54,000	Semi-skilled labor, service, manual and clerical jobs	High school degrees
WORKING POOR	20%	Less than $10,500 to $22,000	Low and unskilled workers, lower-paid manual and service jobs, seasonal work	Some high school
UNDERCLASS	5%	Less than $7,500	Seldom or unemployed, part-time labor, many rely on public or private assistance	Some high school

FIGURE 8.1 **The U.S. Social Class Ladder**

The Middle Class

The **middle class** makes up about 30 percent of the population, though some social analysts believe that the middle class is shrinking as a result of such phenomena as corporate downsizing and outsourcing of work to foreign countries. Many people who would have once been considered middle class have moved up to the upper-middle class or down to the lower-middle class. The middle class comprises primarily **"white-collar"** workers, skilled laborers in technical and lower-management jobs, earning from $55,000 to $88,000. Most members have a high school education and a two- or four-year college degree. While members of the middle class have traditionally been homeowners, given the cost of housing along with other debts, not all can currently afford one.

The Working (Lower-Middle) Class

The **working class**, or **lower-middle class**, makes up about 30 percent of the population. Members typically have a high school education and generally work in manual labor, or **"blue-collar,"** jobs, as well as in the service industry—jobs that are often more routine, where employees have little control in the workplace. Members of the working class typically

middle class composed primarily of "white-collar" workers with a broad range of incomes; they constitute about 30 percent of the U.S. population

white-collar a description characterizing workers and skilled laborers in technical and lower-management jobs

working class or **lower-middle class** mostly "blue-collar" or service industry workers who are less likely to have a college degree; they constitute about 30 percent of the U.S. population

blue-collar a description characterizing workers who perform manual labor

earn between $23,000 and $54,000 per year. A small portion, especially those who belong to a union, may earn above-average incomes for this class. Working-class people typically have a low net worth and live in rental housing or in a modest home they have long saved for.

The Working Poor and Underclass

The **working poor** comprise approximately 20 percent of the population. Members are generally not well educated; most are high school dropouts and experience lower levels of literacy than the other classes. They may also lack other work skills valuable in the job market. Typical occupations include unskilled, temporary, and seasonal jobs—including minimum-wage jobs, housekeeping, day labor, and migrant agricultural work. The average income ranges from less than $10,500 to $22,000. This group suffers from higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, with some members receiving welfare subsidies.

In addition, another 5 percent of the population, the **underclass**, could be categorized as truly disadvantaged. These very poorest of Americans typically earn less than $7,500 per year and may have chronic difficulty getting enough money to support their basic needs. They may hold few steady jobs and depend on public benefits or charity to survive. They are most often found in inner cities, where they live in substandard housing or are homeless. They are part of a group that is considered officially impoverished by federal government standards. A separate section later in this chapter will be devoted to discussing poverty and the poor.

working poor poorly educated workers who work full-time but remain below the poverty line; they constitute about 20 percent of the U.S. population

underclass the poorest Americans who are chronically unemployed and may depend on public or private assistance; they constitute about 5 percent of the U.S. population

Problematic Categories

Because SES is based on a collection of complex variables (including income, wealth, education, and occupation, as well as power or prestige), it is difficult to say exactly where, for example, middle class ends and upper class begins. In addition, individuals may embody a variety of characteristics that make precise SES classification difficult. Someone may be highly educated, for example, but make very little money while working on her novel. Also, as we learned during the financial crisis that began in 2008, people of all social classes, including the very wealthy, can find themselves unable to pay their mortgages when real estate "bubbles" burst.



Status Inconsistencies Sam Walton, the "Okie" billionaire, and Hillary Swank, the two-time Academy Award–winner who lived out of her car, are two examples that complicate SES classifications.

Global Perspective

Systems of Stratification Around the World

Although stratification systems in other countries may appear different from those in the United States, they share many features. For one thing, most such systems result in patterns of inequality.

Brazil

Race is a powerful influence on social stratification in Brazil, where the situation is even more complex than in the United States. By any standards, Brazil is a remarkably diverse nation. The early settlers to the area were mainly European, and with their arrival the number of native inhabitants declined sharply as a result of violence and disease, although they remained a factor in the local population. Through the mid-1800s, slaves from Africa were imported, and in the twentieth century, a new wave of immigrants arrived from Asia and the Middle East.

For much of Brazilian history, the European whites enjoyed a privileged status. However, as people from different races married and raised children, new racial categories emerged. Sociologist Gilberto Freyre claimed in 1970 that this new mixture of races and cultures was a unique strength that led to something like a "racial democracy." Although the idea was appealing, it was subsequently challenged by other social scientists who argued that Brazil was still highly stratified by race, if only in a less obvious way (Telles 2004). Intermarriage may have eliminated clearly defined racial groups, but



Polite Racism As different ethnic groups in Brazil intermarried and had children, new racial categories emerged. Many have argued that this has led to a new "racial democracy"; however, critics say stratification still exists. They refer to it as "polite racism."

And how do we categorize a person such as the late Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart—billionaire businessman, Oklahoma farm boy, and state college graduate? The product of a nonelite educational institution and a struggling "Okie" farm family, he nevertheless made tons of money and achieved great occupational success. What sociologists would say is that Walton was an example of **status inconsistency**, or stark contrasts in the level of different statuses he occupied. Two-time Oscar-winner Hilary Swank is another example—she never went to college, lived in her car for a while in Los Angeles, and earned only $3,000 for the role in *Boys Don't*

status inconsistency a situation in which there are serious differences between the different elements of an individual's socioeconomic status

skin color still largely defines an individual's place in society, with light-skinned Brazilians enjoying privileges of wealth and power that their dark-skinned countrymen don't have access to. Contemporary critics have referred to this inequality as *racismo cordial*, or "polite racism."

Iran

The basis for social stratification in Iran has undergone radical changes since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, which transformed the country from a constitutional monarchy to a theocracy. Before the revolution, political and economic power was concentrated in the upper class, made up of landowners, industrialists, and business executives; the middle class consisted of entrepreneurs, small-business owners, merchants, and members of the civil service. Economic mobility was an option largely for those with secular values and a Western education—that is, those who had gone to college in the United States or Europe and who believed in the separation of church and state. After the revolution, however, religion became a primary influence on stratification. Many members of the civil service with Western university degrees were forced into exile; those who remained were required to attend special classes on Islamic law in order to keep their positions. Strict observance of Islamic law and custom has become a new prerequisite for maintaining one's social position, and many of the new political elites are religious leaders.

Sweden

Sweden has deliberately attempted to craft a system that lessens social inequality, a policy made somewhat easier, perhaps, by the country's relative homogeneity of race, ethnicity, and religion. Sweden has provided its citizens with a far greater number of social services than the United States has: the government guarantees its citizens a high level of access to health care, education, child and elderly care, unemployment benefits, and public facilities like libraries and parks. In order to furnish such programs, taxes are high, with a top taxation rate of 60 percent for the wealthiest Swedes. Although the Swedish system certainly has its problems (high taxation rates among them), there are demonstrated benefits, including increased life expectancy and literacy and decreased infant mortality, homelessness, poverty, and crime.



Inequality in Sweden? The Swedish have crafted social policies to promote access to child care, public libraries, education, and unemployment benefits in order to lessen social stratification.

Cry that won her her first Academy Award. She remarked on her own status inconsistency when she accepted her second Oscar (for *Million Dollar Baby*): "I'm just a girl from a trailer park who had a dream."

Status inconsistencies are especially prevalent in the United States because of our "open" class system. Class mobility (which will be discussed in more detail later) is more easily attainable here than in many other countries—here, a girl from a trailer park *can* win an Oscar. So while we seem to be able to recognize class distinctions implicitly, there are no systematic ways of delineating each category. Still, sociologists have made an effort to understand and define class, and we turn now to the theories that result from those efforts.

Theories of Social Class

In this section, we will look at the work of two classical macrosociologists, Karl Marx and Max Weber, the postmodern theorist Pierre Bourdieu, and symbolic interactionists David Sudnow and Erving Goffman. Each has a different idea about what determines social class, with the macrotheorists focusing on larger-scale social structure and the symbolic interactionists focusing more on face-to-face interactions and everyday life.

Karl Marx

Karl Marx formed his social theories at a time when monumental changes were occurring in the stratification systems that characterized nineteenth-century Europe. The **feudal system**, which consisted of a hierarchy of privileged nobles who were responsible for and served by a lower stratum of serfs (forced laborers), was breaking down. Cities were growing larger as more people moved from rural areas to take part in the new forms of industry that were emerging there. With these changes, what had traditionally determined a person's social standing (whether they were born a noble or a serf) was no longer as relevant. Marx was concerned about a new kind of social inequality that he saw emerging—between the capitalists (bourgeoisie), who owned the means of production, and the workers (proletariat), who owned only their own labor.

Marx argued that economic relationships were quickly becoming the only social relationships that mattered: the impersonal forces of the market were creating a new, rigid system of social stratification in which capitalists had every economic advantage and workers had none. He believed that the classes would remain divided and social inequality would grow; that wealth and privilege would be concentrated among a small group of capitalists and workers would continue to be exploited. Contemporary conflict theorists continue to understand social class in a similar way. Erik Olin Wright (1997), for example, describes an animated film he made as a student in which the pawns on a chessboard attempt to overthrow the aristocracy (kings, queens, knights, and bishops) but realize that the "rules of the game" doom them to relive the same unequal roles—a metaphor for the way social structure shapes and sustains inequality.

feudal system a system of social stratification based on a hereditary nobility who were responsible for and served by a lower stratum of forced laborers called serfs

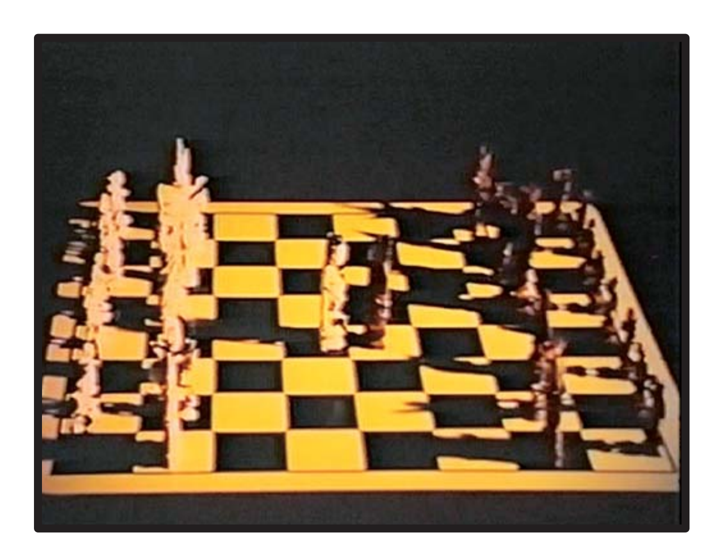
prestige the social honor people are given because of their membership in well-regarded social groups

Max Weber

Max Weber noted that owning the means of production was not the only way of achieving upper-class status; a person could also accumulate wealth consisting of income and property. As a contemporary example, Microsoft is a publicly traded company (which means that thousands of shareholders own it), but its CEO Steve Ballmer is one of the world's top 20 richest individuals—and its chairman, Bill Gates, is the richest. Thus, Weber suggests that power (the ability to impose one's will on others) should be considered as part of the equation when measuring a person's class standing. Although they may not own their corporation, executives do exercise power over employees and are able to control their access to salaries, benefits, and job security.

Weber believed that another important element in social class has to do with **prestige**, the social honor granted to people because of their membership in certain groups. A person's occupation is a common source of prestige: in a typical ranking, you might find doctors near the top and janitors near the bottom (Table 8.1). People's relative prestige can affect not only their wealth or power but also how they are perceived in social situations. Wealth by itself can also be a source of prestige, though not always. In some social circles, especially those that are more traditional or have a history of aristocracy, a distinction is made between "old money" and "new money." In the United States it is more prestigious to come from a family heritage of wealth than to have recently made a fortune.

For Weber, wealth, power, and prestige are interrelated because they often come together, but it is also possible to



The Rules of the Game As a student, Marxist sociologist Erik Olin Wright made a film using chess pieces as a metaphor for the ways that social structure sustains inequality.

TABLE 8.1 The Relative Social Prestige of Selected Occupations in the United States

WHITE COLLAR OCCUPATIONS	PRESTIGE SCORE	BLUE COLLAR OCCUPATIONS
Physician	86	
Lawyer	75	
College/University Professor	74	
Architect	73	
Chemist	73	
Physicist/Astronomer	73	
Aerospace Engineer	72	
Dentist	72	
Member of the Clergy	69	
Psychologist	69	
Pharmacist	68	
Optometrist	67	
Registered Nurse	66	
Secondary-School Teacher	64	
Accountant	65	
Athlete	65	
Electrical Engineer	64	
Elementary-School Teacher	64	
Economist	63	
Veterinarian	62	
Airplane Pilot	61	
Computer Programmer	61	
Sociologist	61	
Editor/Reporter	60	
	60	Police Officer
Actor	58	
Radio/TV Announcer	55	
Librarian	54	
	53	Aircraft Mechanic
	53	Fire Fighter
Social Worker	52	
	51	Electrician
Computer Operator	50	
Funeral Director	49	
Realtor	49	
Bookkeeper	47	
	47	Machinist
	47	Mail Carrier
Musician/Composer	47	
	46	Secretary
Photographer	45	
Bank Teller	43	
	42	Tailor
	42	Welder
	40	Farmer
	40	Telephone Operator
	39	Carpenter
	36	Brick/Stone Mason
	36	Child-Care Worker
File Clerk	36	
	36	Hairdresser
	35	Baker
	34	Bulldozer Operator
	31	Auto Body Repairperson
Retail Apparel Salesperson	30	
	30	Truck Driver
Cashier	29	
	28	Elevator Operator
	28	Garbage Collector
	28	Taxi Driver
	28	Waiter/Waitress
	27	Bellhop
	25	Bartender
	23	Farm Laborer
	23	Household Laborer
	22	Door-to-Door Salesperson
	22	Janitor
	9	Shoe Shiner

SOURCE: Data from National Opinion Research Center 2001

convert one to the other. Paris Hilton, for example, a socialite from a wealthy hotel-owning family, turned that aspect of her status into a certain type of contemporary prestige—celebrity. Still, it is important to distinguish these three elements: property and wealth can be inherited or earned, power usually comes from occupying certain roles within organizations, and prestige is based on a person's social identity and bestowed by others.

Pierre Bourdieu

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu studied French schools to examine a phenomenon referred to as **social reproduction**, which means that social class is passed down from one generation to the next and thus remains relatively stable (1973, 1984). According to Bourdieu, this happens as a result of each generation's acquiring what he called **cultural capital**: children inherit tastes, habits, and expectations from their parents, and this cultural capital either helps or hinders them as they become adults. For example, having highly educated parents who can help with homework and enforce useful study habits makes it more likely a child will succeed in school. Just the parents' expectation that their children will earn similar credentials can be a powerful incentive. Since better-educated parents tend to come from the middle and upper classes, their children will also have better chances to attain that same status.

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital also shapes the perceptions that others form about a person. For instance, in job interviews, the candidates who can best impress a potential employer with their social skills may be chosen over others who are less adept. Since cultural capital has such profound effects, people often try to acquire it—to "better" themselves. They may take adult education classes, attend lectures and concerts, or travel to Europe—all in an attempt to improve their cultural capital. Often, however, the effects of early childhood are too powerful to overcome. It can be difficult for someone who grew up in a less privileged environment to project a different class background; their accent, for example, may give them away ("He talks like a hillbilly," "She just sounds too 'street' "). There is evidence that around half of all children will wind up with the same SES as their parents, despite any efforts to climb the social class ladder (Krueger 2002).

social reproduction the tendency of social classes to remain relatively stable as social class status is passed down from one generation to the next

cultural capital the tastes, habits, expectations, skills, knowledge, and other cultural dispositions that help us gain advantages in society

class consciousness awareness of one's own social status and that of others

Symbolic Interactionism

If macrosociologists believe that there is little an individual can do to change systems of structured inequality, interactionists believe that all social structures—including systems of inequality—are constructed from the building blocks of everyday interaction. For instance, sociologist David Sudnow (1972) argues that we make split-second judgments about who people are and which social status they occupy based on appearance. We take action based on what we observe "at a glance." Along the same lines, Aaron Cicourel (1972) suggests that we make inferences about the status of others when we encounter them in different social situations. For example, you may assume that the passengers sitting in the first-class section of an airplane are wealthier than those in coach, whether or not this is true. Maybe one of those first-class passengers is a "starving student" whose seat was upgraded because coach was overbooked—by thrifty millionaires. "Wealthy," "poor," and "middle class" are statuses that, rather than existing in and of themselves, are continuously being negotiated in interaction.

Erving Goffman (1956) noted that we "read" different aspects of identity by interpreting the behavior of others and that we become accustomed to others "reading" our behavior in the same way. This means that our clothing, our speech, our gestures, the cars we drive, the homes we live in, the people we hang out with, and the things we do on vacation are all part of our presentation of self and provide information that others use to make judgments about our SES. In turn, we look for these same clues in the behavior of others. This type of everyday **class consciousness**, or awareness of our own and others' social status, is important for us to understand but difficult to identify empirically.

As a humorous answer to this dilemma, University of Pennsylvania English professor Paul Fussell (1983) created the "living room scale," which lists items that we may find in someone's living room and attaches point values to them. For example, if you have a copy of the *New York Review of Books* on your coffee table, add five points. A copy of *Popular Mechanics*? Subtract five. A working fireplace? Add four. A wall unit with built-in television and stereo? Subtract four. Add three points for each black-and-white family photograph in a sterling silver frame; subtract three points for any work of art depicting cowboys. When we total the final score, higher numbers indicate higher SES, and vice versa.

While Fussell's living room scale may seem like a joke, we really do make snap judgments about the status of others based on just this sort of information. (Here it should be noted that in Dr. Stein's living room, the fireplace and TV wall unit are side by side, while Dr. Ferris's living room



The Living Room Scale Paul Fussell's suggestion to use living room decor as an indicator of SES may seem like a joke, but we do become accustomed to "reading" one another's status based on this sort of information.

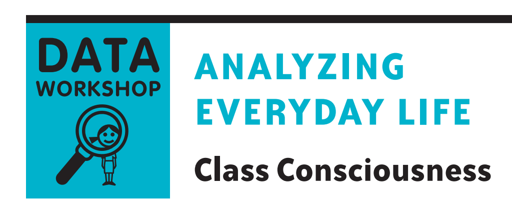
features a silver-framed black-and-white photograph of her father as a child—dressed like a cowboy, on horseback! As we've said before, real life sometimes defies easy categorization.) The Data Workshop on the next page will help you see how swiftly and automatically you employ class categories in your interactions with others.

While we have considered the theories of macrosociologists and symbolic interactionists separately here, there are actually some intersections between interaction and structure. Our identities as "working class" or "privileged" individuals may be structured by preexisting categories, yet those identities are also performed every day in our interactions

TABLE 8.2 ***Theory in Everyday Life***

Perspective	Approach to Social Inequality	Case Study: Poverty
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Social inequality is a necessary part of society. Even poverty has functions that help maintain social order.	The functions of poverty for society include the fact that the poor take otherwise undesirable jobs, live in otherwise unacceptable housing, purchase discount and secondhand goods, and provide work for thousands, including social service caseworkers and others who work with the poor.
CONFLICT THEORY	Social inequality creates intergroup conflict—poor and rich groups have different interests and may find themselves at odds as they attempt to secure and protect them.	Social welfare programs that assist the poor are funded by tax dollars, which some wealthy citizens may be reluctant to provide because taxes reduce their net income. This can create conflict between rich and poor groups in society.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Social inequality is part of our presentation of self.	Poor and wealthy persons have differential access to the "props" used to project particular versions of self. In particular, professional clothing such as business suits can be too expensive for poor individuals to purchase, which can put them at a disadvantage in job interviews, where a professional image is necessary. Organizations like Dress for Success provide professional clothing for those who can't afford it, leveling the playing field a bit in terms of impression management.

with others. The structural perspective and the interactionist perspective are not mutually exclusive when it comes to a discussion of class: they are complementary. Status inequality is structured, categorical, and external; it is also interactionally created and sustained. Structure shapes interaction, and interaction generates structure (Table 8.2). Contemporary sociologists have conducted studies that make this connection clear. For example, Geoffrey Hunt and Saundra Satterlee, who studied drinking habits in village pubs (1986), found that pub interactions tended to reinforce class divisions in the larger society: the village men chose drinking and billiards companions based on the class divisions already in place outside the pub.



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Class Consciousness

How do you determine the class status of others? How do you deal with the fact that others will be assessing *your* class status? How do these assessments influence your actions?

This Data Workshop asks you to do some participant observation research (see Chapter 3 for a refresher, if needed) to understand more about how we size up others in terms of their SES. Next time you're in a public place—for example, waiting for someone at the airport, sitting in the food court at the mall, or standing in line at the post office—select the seventh person to walk by you, and spend several seconds looking closely at him or her. Ask yourself quickly: what class status do you think this person holds? Don't think too long, just register your guess. Then consider the following.

What did you look at to make the evaluation—height, weight, race, gender, hair style, tattoos, piercings, clothes, makeup? Perhaps dress style, colors, fabrics, writing on T-shirt, hat, purse, shoes, jewelry? Did you notice anything else, such as posture, voice, or mannerisms? If you observed someone outdoors, did you see the car he or she was driving? What was its make, age, or condition? Did you notice other status clues—books, a laptop, a baby stroller, shopping bags? How did the setting itself (mall, post office, airport) influence your guess?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare written notes that you can refer to in class. Share your evaluations with other students in small-group discussions. Note similarities and differences in the criteria used by group members.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Select two to three people in a public setting to evaluate. Write a three- to four-page essay describing your observations and answering the questions in the preceding paragraphs. You may also want to refer to the section on symbolic interactionism (p. 220) as a framework for your essay.

All the information that we gather at a glance is used to make evaluations of others' wealth, income, occupation, education, and other categories that indicate status and prestige. In some ways, it doesn't matter whether we're right or not—especially in anonymous public places like airports. You should be aware, however, that you do use these cues to evaluate the status of others in split seconds and that you act on those evaluations every day. Maybe you chose to stand on the bus or subway rather than sit next to someone who didn't look quite "right"—whatever that means to you. Often we end up falling back on stereotypes that may lead us to false conclusions about a person's status or character. When it comes to everyday class consciousness, appearances are sometimes deceiving, but they are always consequential.

Socioeconomic Status and Life Chances

Belonging to a certain social class brings such profound consequences that it's possible to make general predictions about a person's life chances in regard to education, work, crime, family, and health just by knowing his SES. The following discussion may help you appreciate the respective privileges and hardships associated with different levels of the social hierarchy.

Family

Sociologists know that people are likely to marry or have long-term relationships with persons whose social and cultural backgrounds are similar to their own—not because they are looking for such similarities, but simply because they have more access to people like themselves. When you develop ties to classmates, fellow workers, neighbors, and members of clubs, these people may share your cultural background as well as your social class. It is from such groups that marriage partners come.

Social class also plays a role in the age at which people marry: the average age of first marriage for women with high school diplomas is 25, while for women with graduate degrees it is 30. The age at which people start a family and the number of children they have are also related to social class. The 2000 census found that women with only a high school diploma had twice the birthrate of women with graduate degrees. Further, of the women with less than a high school education who gave birth to a first child, almost 64 percent were unmarried (U.S. Census Bureau 2000a). That's more than twice the figure of premarital births for women who have at least some college.

Health

Those at the bottom of the social class ladder are the least likely to obtain adequate nutrition, shelter, clothing, and health care and are thus more prone to illness. They often cannot afford to see a doctor, fill a prescription, or go to a hospital. Instead of preventing an illness from becoming worse, they must wait until a health crisis occurs, and then they have no option but expensive emergency room care.

Sociologists have found that people who occupy a higher SES are more likely to simply *feel* healthier. In one study of Americans over age 25, researchers found that regardless of age, race, or gender, people with more education were more likely to report being in excellent health: fewer than 40 percent of those with less than a high school education reported being in good health, compared with nearly 80 percent of those with a college degree (Baum and Payea 2004). Another study found that not only do people of higher SES feel healthier, they in fact live longer—almost five years longer than people of low SES (Singh and Siahpush 2006).

One factor that contributes to disparities in health is exercise. As education and income increase, so does the likelihood of a person engaging in some exercise, as reported in 2006 by the National Center for Health Statistics. For instance, nearly 72 percent of respondents living below the poverty level reported not exercising at all, compared with only 47.7 percent of those with a yearly income over $75,000. Only about 8.2 percent of those below poverty reported exercising three to four times a week, compared with more than 19 percent of those in the highest income bracket. Education may have something to do with these contrasts, as more knowledge about the health benefits of exercise may lead to more active participation. But we can also see exercise as rather a luxury for those in higher social classes, who are not struggling with the day-to-day efforts to survive that characterize the lives of the poor.

Education

How children perform in school usually determines whether and where they go to college, what professions they enter, and how much they are paid. And generally, those with more education make more money. According to a 2008 Census Bureau report, the average annual income for those with professional degrees (medical or law degrees) was $90,900, followed by $51,700 for those with bachelor's degrees, $30,100 for those with high school diplomas, and $20,900 for nongraduates (U.S. Census Bureau 2008b). On the surface, these earnings may seem fair; after all, shouldn't people with more education make more money? However,

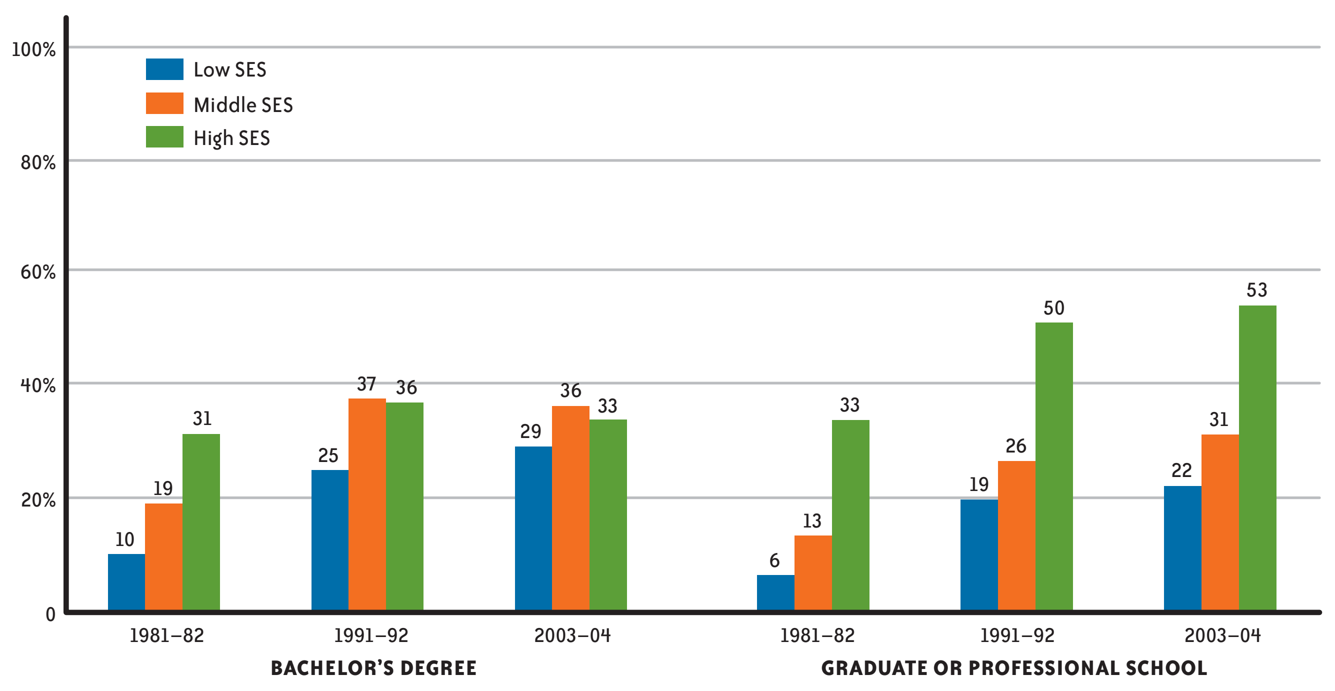


FIGURE 8.2 Percentage of 12th Graders Expecting to Earn a Bachelor's Degree or Attend Graduate or Professional School, by Family Socioeconomic Status (SES) The higher the family's SES, the higher the student's expectation of educational achievement. Increasing numbers of students now expect to attend graduate or professional school.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2005

as sociologists, we must probe further and ask some fundamental questions, for example, who has access to education, and how good is that education?

One of the main goals of education is to make sure students get a chance to succeed both in school and in life. But to meet this goal, schools would have to serve all students equally, and they aren't always able to do so. Schools with low-income students often receive fewer resources, have greater difficulty in attracting qualified teachers, and enjoy less support from parents (Fischer and Kmec 2004). A student's social class background will also influence her attitude toward education. The higher the family's SES, the higher the student's expectations. Students from higher social classes are also expected to complete more years of school and are more likely to attend college than those from lower social classes (Berends 1995; Goyette and Xie 1999).

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report (2008b), approximately 30 percent of adults aged twenty-five and over had a high school education, 20 percent had some college, 17 percent had a bachelor's degree, and 10 percent had advanced degrees. But although educational attainment is at an all-time high in the United States, a high school education doesn't mean what it once did. College and advanced degrees are becoming more important. If the trends continue, fewer and fewer jobs will be available to those without college degrees, and of those jobs, fewer will support middle-class lifestyles. Yet not all students are equally prepared for or able to afford a college education, and this creates a risk that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds will slip further down the social class ladder.

Work and Income

In the past couple of decades, we have seen a widening income gap between those at the top, middle, and bottom of the scale (Bernstein et al. 2000; Wolff 2002). Income is the product of work, and members of different social classes, with unequal educational opportunities, tend to work in different types of jobs.

At the bottom of the scale, members of the lower class generally experience difficulties in the job market and may endure periods of unemployment or underemployment (working in a job that doesn't pay enough to support a person's needs, or that doesn't make full use of his skills). Among the lower class are people receiving such government aid as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (4.5 million in 2005; U.S. Census Bureau 2008c) or food stamps (26.7 million in 2006; U.S. Census Bureau 2008c)

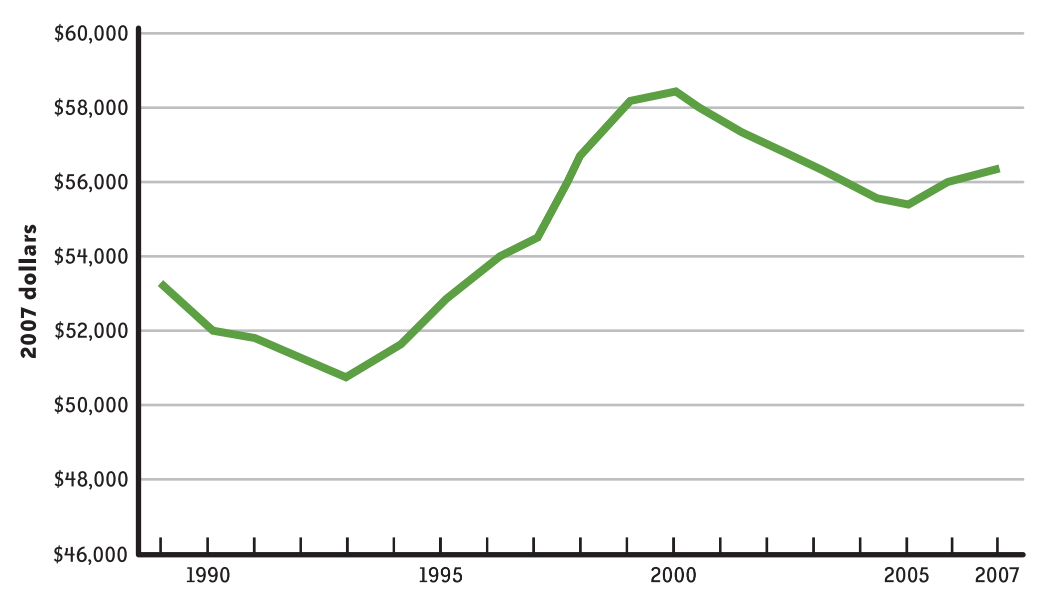


FIGURE 8.3 **Real Median Income for Working-Age Households, 1989–2007**

SOURCE: Bernstein 2008

and the 3 million migrant farm workers who earn low wages picking strawberries, tomatoes, and other produce in places like California, Texas, and Kansas (González 2007).

Members of the working, or lower-middle, class work for wages in a variety of blue-collar jobs. They can generally earn a dependable income through skilled or semiskilled occupations, but they may also experience periods of unemployment tied to fluctuations in the economy, layoffs, and plant closings. For example, in 2008 alone the United States lost over 600,000 jobs as a result of factory shut-downs and other problems associated with the economic downturn (Garr 2008).

While factory work and other types of skilled labor were once enough to support a middle-class lifestyle, most middle-class jobs today are found in the service, information, and technology sectors. Most households here require two incomes to maintain a comfortable lifestyle, and many middle-class jobs require some sort of college degree.

The upper-middle class tends to work in executive and professional fields. Some members are business owners; a small portion own large farms or ranches. Others, known as the "creative class" (Florida 2002)—architects, writers, scientists, artists, professors, and engineers—tend to cluster in "creative" cities such as Austin, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Through exceptional success in any profession or art, if not through inheritance, one can join the upper class. In the United States, the upper class is influential in politics, business, and culture, largely because of their economic privilege: in our highly stratified society, the top 1 percent control over 33 percent of the national wealth (Wolff 2004).

As a result of the recent recession, more workers are at risk of layoffs because of outsourcing. Corporations seeking to cut costs have been relocating their operations overseas, in countries where labor costs are lower. Both manufacturing and service jobs are subject to outsourcing, meaning that blue-collar and white-collar workers—and even some higher-ranking executives—are now vulnerable.

Criminal Justice

In general, people of lower SES are more likely to encounter the criminal justice system, whether as a perpetrator or victim of crime, than those of higher SES. But the statistics are not as straightforward as they might seem. One influential study (Blau and Blau 1982) showed that while poverty is associated with higher rates of violent crime, variables such as dense population and anomie (a sense of alienation or lack of social connections) have an even greater impact on crime rates.

As we saw in Chapter 7, people in lower classes are often more visible, less powerful, and thus more likely to be caught and labeled as criminals than those from higher social classes. There are also differences in how crimes are prosecuted. White-collar criminals are less likely to be arrested, prosecuted, or convicted than ordinary "street" criminals (Schwellenbach 2008). White-collar criminals (such as Enron heads Jeffrey Skilling and the late Kenneth Lay, or Bernie Madoff whose Ponzi scheme bilked wealthy clients of billions of dollars) can also afford the best legal representation and hence enjoy distinct advantages in the courtroom. Studies have claimed that 90 percent of inmates



Socioeconomic Status and Mate Selection

You say you don't judge a book by its cover? You say it's the person who matters, and not the social categories he or she belongs to? We may believe these things, but sociological studies strongly suggest that we don't act on them. When it comes to dating, courtship, and marriage ("mate selection" activities, as defined by social scientists), we tend to make homogamous choices. **Homogamy** ("like marries like") means that we choose romantic partners based on our similarities in background and group membership. Despite the old adage that "opposites attract," decades of sociological research show that we make choices based on similarities in race, ethnicity, religion, class, education, age—even height and levels of physical attractiveness (Kalmijn 1998). Homogamy based on socioeconomic status is especially clear: we tend to marry those who share the same economic and educational backgrounds as we do. This holds true even if we practice **heterogamy** (marrying someone who is different from us) in other areas such as race or religion. Why is class-based homogamy so prevalent?

As it turns out, we have relatively few opportunities to meet people of different socioeconomic backgrounds during the course of our everyday lives. At home, at school, on the job, at the coffee shop or gym, we are likely to be surrounded by those who are like us, classwise. Homogamy is more strictly enforced in upper-class families than in other social classes. Those who enjoy the privileges of wealth often want to make sure those privileges continue into the next generation and may monitor their children's activities by sending them to prestigious schools and posh summer camps so that they don't get the opportunity to meet anyone but other privileged kids. This helps ensure that wealth and power remain consolidated within a relatively small community. If you spend all your free time at the country club pool instead of getting a summer job working at Starbucks or McDonald's, your opportunities to meet the *hoi polloi* are limited.

If we focus only on those in the public eye, it is easy to see how limits on opportunity result in marriages between affluent and powerful families. For example: Julie Nixon, daughter of the former president, married David Eisenhower, grandson of another former president. Kerry Kennedy, daughter of former attorney general Robert Kennedy, married (and later divorced) Andrew Cuomo, son of former New York governor Mario Cuomo. NBC reporter Andrea Mitchell married Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan. Lady Diana Spencer was approved as a proper match for Britain's Prince Charles because she was descended from royalty herself. Movie stars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, country singers Faith Hill and Tim McGraw, actress Ashley Judd and race car driver Dario Franchitti all practiced a form of status homogamy by partnering with people from the same social circles—wealthy,

on death row could not afford to hire a lawyer when they were tried (Lane and Tabak 1991) and that the quality of representation, rather than the actual facts presented in a trial, determines whether someone is sentenced to death (ACLU 2003). If they are convicted, white-collar criminals' sentences are likely to be lighter. Still, while Enron's Ken Lay avoided prison time by dying of a massive heart attack several months before his October 2006 sentencing date, Jeffrey Skilling was sentenced to an unprecedented 24 years in prison. Perhaps his punishment will serve as a deterrent for other high-status criminals.

Lower-class people are also more likely to be the victims of violent crime. Statistics consistently show that poor people are more than one and a half times more likely to be victims of violent crime than those in higher social class brackets (Levinson 2002). At the same time, people with lower SES are also more likely to feel at risk of harassment by police. As both education and income decreased, respondents reported feeling more threatened by police; as education and income increased, they felt less threatened (Levinson 2002).

Social class affects more than just our financial or material state—it is intricately woven into the fabric of our lives. You

prestigious celebrities. Whether they met on the set, at the yacht club, or at an awards show, they met in a status-restricted setting to which not everyone is eligible for entry.

Questions have arisen recently about how Internet technologies may facilitate—or impede—our tendency toward homogamy. Dating sites such as eHarmony, Match.com, and others allow people who occupy vastly different social circles to meet online—and perhaps fall in love. In this way, it would seem that Internet dating has the potential to inhibit our off-line predilection for people who belong to the same social groups we do. On the other hand, Internet dating can also assist us in choosing people who are like us, in that certain sites cater to particular social groups. J-Date (for Jewish singles), The Right Stuff (for Ivy Leaguers) and other specialty sites select for social group membership and may actually strengthen homogamous effects in our online mate selection processes.

Vast differences in class standing between marital partners are usually the stuff of fairy tales and fantasy. The "Cinderella story," in which a low-status woman is romantically "rescued" by a high-status man, is familiar to us all—yet we likely have seen it happen only in storybooks and movie theaters. *Pretty Woman*, in which Julia Roberts plays a prostitute who is romanced by Richard Gere's wealthy businessman, is a perfect example of this type of heterogamous fantasy, as is *Maid in Manhattan*, in which Jennifer Lopez plays a hotel housekeeper who is wooed by Ralph Fiennes's character, a rich political candidate. The only touch of sociological reality in these tales is the portrayal of women's **hypergamy** and men's **hypogamy**: that is, when class boundaries are crossed, women usually marry up while men marry down. Take a look at the role of SES in your own mate selection activities: are you homogamous or heterogamous?



Marrying Up Very little is realistic about films like *Pretty Woman*. People rarely marry outside their socioeconomic status.

may once have concluded that differences in people's education, work, family, or health were simply a matter of individual preference or effort or that each individual is responsible for her own circumstances. While this may be true to some extent, research shows that social class background has a profound impact on one's life chances, leading those with different statuses into very different life courses. This means that we can't take for granted whatever advantages or disadvantages we might experience but should acknowledge how hierarchies of inequality have helped to create our particular social realities.

Social Mobility

How do people move from one social class to another? In other words, how do they achieve **social mobility**? Sociologists use the concept of social mobility to measure movement within the stratification system of a particular society, whether it's a small town, a state or nation, or the entire world. In some societies,

social mobility the movement of individuals or groups within the hierarchal system of social classes

On the Job

Digital Divide

In a postindustrial economy, most of us will have to acquire a certain level of computer proficiency in order to secure a job. One way or another, the majority of jobs in contemporary society involve computers, so you'll have to know how to program one or use certain programs to do your work, whatever it may be—editing and publishing, say, or accounting or graphic design, fine woodworking or auto repair, teaching or engineering or nursing. Because you are attending college, you'll probably be lucky enough to acquire some of these skills in the course of your education. But not everyone has the opportunities you have, and many in the United States and around the world lack the basic computer skills, experience, and access necessary to secure a decent job. This inequality in access to and use of digital technology is known as the **digital divide**.

Actually, in the words of PBS media and technology reporter Mark Glaser, "there are many digital divides." The hierarchies of inequality in the larger society—such as race, class, and educational attainment—all shape one's access to technology (Glaser 2007). For example, while 73 percent of all adults in the United States use the Internet regularly, only 59 percent of African Americans, 53 percent of those with a household income under $30,000, and 44 percent of those with less than a high school education do so (Pew Internet and American Life Project 2009).



These disparities mirror the contours of other sorts of social inequality, especially because computer and Internet technology access requires resources—funds to purchase computers and subscribe to broadband, or to feed the meter at the Internet café, or even to support public libraries that sometimes provide free access. The wealthy and privileged tend to have more of these resources, while the poor or underprivileged have less.

The digital divide is really about the benefits of technology access rather than merely the access itself. This is because with access to computers and the Internet come additional related opportunities and privileges, especially in education and the job market. Sure, everyone deserves the opportunity to play video games—but think of the other things you do with your digital access: you take online classes; you utilize job search and resume-posting services; you develop skills that facilitate recruitment into high-tech careers. Without these benefits, certain educational and employment opportunities would be closed to you, no matter how smart or ambitious you might be.

Just as there are digitally disadvantaged groups and individuals domestically, there are digitally disadvantaged countries—the digital divide is global. In underdeveloped and developing nations, real poverty leads to "information poverty" as well (Norris 2001) and creates further obstacles to development—a kind of self-sealing loop. The organization One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) has developed a small, sturdy, low-power portable computer with the goal of distributing the green and yellow machines to children in developing countries such as Uruguay, Libya, Peru, and Rwanda. OLPC corporate sponsors such as Intel and eBay recognize the benefits of trying to help the organization bridge the digital divide—indeed, they may be helping to put computers in the hands of kids who will someday grow up to work for them!

social mobility is highly restricted by formal or informal rules. India's caste system is an example of what sociologists refer to as a **closed system**: there is very little opportunity for social mobility between classes. The United States, where social mobility is possible, is perceived to be an **open system**. It was not always so, however: in the period of history preceding the Civil War, slavery was widespread, keeping African Americans from climbing the social class ladder.

The movement of people between social classes can happen in three different ways: through intergenerational mobility, intragenerational mobility, or structural mobility. **Intergenerational mobility** refers to the movement that occurs from one generation to the next, when a child eventually moves into a different social class from that of her parents. Research shows that baby boomers (children born immediately after World War II) have, for the most part, achieved upward intergenerational mobility: they have generally amassed more wealth over the course of their lives and consequently moved up the social class ladder. Some social scientists, however, claim that the distribution of income across generations has grown more static and that there are fewer opportunities for advancement than before (Krueger 2002), as tax laws and social policies allow the wealthy to protect their assets and make it more difficult for the middle and lower classes to increase theirs.

Intragenerational mobility refers to the movement that occurs over the course of an individual's lifetime. In other words, it is the measure between a person's ascribed status, the social class she is born into, and her achieved status, the social class she reaches over her lifetime. Intragenerational mobility can be measured in two directions. **Horizontal social mobility**, which is fairly common, refers to the changing of jobs within a class: a therapist who shifts careers so that he can teach college experiences horizontal mobility. **Vertical social mobility** is movement up or down the social ladder, and thus is often called upward or downward mobility. If this same therapist marries a president of a large corporation, he might experience upward mobility. On the other hand, if he or his wife becomes unemployed, he might experience downward mobility. People are far more likely to experience horizontal than vertical social mobility.

Although we usually think of social mobility as the result of individual effort (or lack thereof), other factors can contribute to a change in one's social class. **Structural mobility** occurs when large numbers of people move up or down the social ladder because of structural changes in society as a whole, particularly when the economic sector is affected by large-scale events. For instance, during the Great Depression of the early 1930s, precipitated by the stock market crash of 1929, huge numbers of upper- and middle-class people suddenly found themselves among the poor. Conversely, during the dot-com boom of the late 1990s, developing and investing in new technologies made many people into overnight millionaires. Both of these extreme periods eventually leveled out. Still, many people in the Depression era remained in their new class, never able to climb up the social ladder again.

Defining Poverty

Social mobility is most difficult—and most essential—for those who live at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. In this section, we look at what it means to be poor in America.

Poverty can be defined in relative or absolute terms. **Relative deprivation** is a comparative measure, whereby people are considered poor if their standard of living is less than that of other members of society—for example, a Wal-Mart clerk who works part-time for a minimum wage is poor compared with a neurosurgeon whose salary is $500,000. **Absolute deprivation**, on the other hand, is a measure whereby people are unable to meet minimal standards for food, shelter, clothing, and health care. In Burundi, for example, between 60 and 70 percent of the population experience chronic malnutrition (U.N. Millennium Project 2001). Hunger and malnutrition are basic indicators of absolute deprivation.

In the United States, the federal poverty line—an absolute measure, calculated annually—indicates the total annual income below which a family would be considered poor. These figures are derived from either the poverty thresholds established by the Census Bureau or the guidelines established by the Department of Health and Human Services. In 2008, the Census Bureau defined

closed system a social system with very little opportunity to move from one class to another

open system a social system with ample opportunities to move from one class to another

intergenerational mobility movement between social classes that occurs from one generation to the next

intragenerational mobility the movement between social classes that occurs over the course of an individual's lifetime

horizontal social mobility the occupational movement of individuals or groups within a social class

vertical social mobility the movement between different class statuses, often called either upward mobility or downward mobility

structural mobility changes in the social status of large numbers of people due to structural changes in society

relative deprivation a relative measure of poverty based on the standard of living in a particular society

absolute deprivation an objective measure of poverty, defined by the inability to meet minimal standards for food, shelter, clothing, or health care

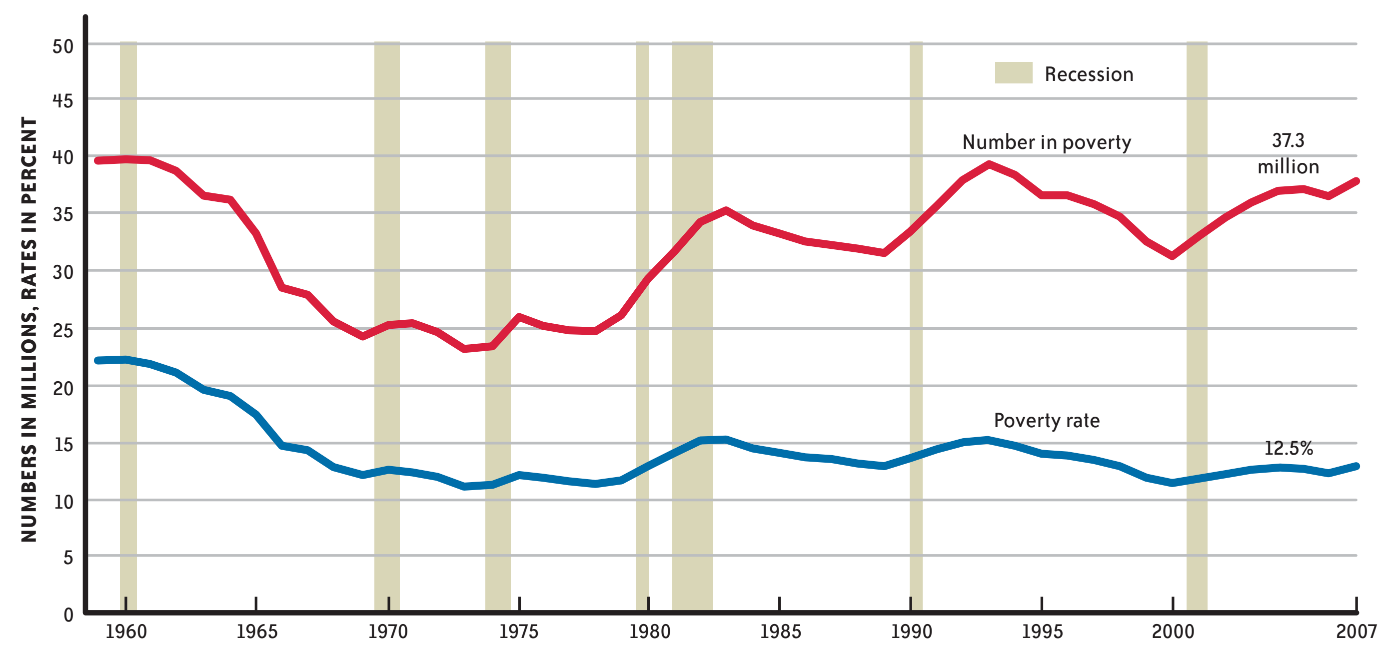


FIGURE 8.4 Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate, 1959–2007 Although poverty rates declined sharply during the "war on poverty" of the early 1960s, they have remained relatively stable in the decades since.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau 2008c

the poverty threshold as $21,200 for a family of four, $17,600 for a family of three, $14,000 for a family of two, and $10,400 for an individual (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services 2008). In fact, families making much more than these amounts, although not officially qualifying as poor, might still be unable to afford some basic necessities.

How many people fall below the poverty line? The numbers are startling, given that we usually think of the United States as a wealthy nation. In 2007, approximately 12.5 percent of the population, or 37.3 million people, were considered poor, a rise in numbers but not in percentages over the 2006 rate. During the past 40 years, the percentage of poor people has fluctuated, but it has never dipped below 10 percent. In fact, the number has occasionally risen to over 15 percent and in the late 1950s was as high as 22 percent (Figure 8.4). And contrary to popular myth, most poor people are not unemployed; they are known as the working poor. The annual earnings of a full-time worker making $7.25 an hour (the 2009 federal minimum wage) still puts him below the poverty line if he is trying to support a family. Almost a third of working families in the United States with children under age 12 don't earn enough to afford basic necessities (Economic Policy Institute 2001).

The poverty line has often been criticized because of the way it is uniformly applied without regard to regional or other differences. For instance, a family living in Washington, D.C., might need twice or three times as much income as a family in Des Moines for expenses like rent, transportation, health insurance, and child care (exceptions are made for Alaska and Hawaii, both states with extremely high costs of living). In addition, some families may be eligible to receive some form of government assistance, such as food stamps or the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which makes a difference in the total amount of their household money. Many working families thus live close to the edge and struggle to make ends meet but are not included as part of the official poverty statistics (Waldron et al. 2004).

Poverty is also more prominent among certain population groups (Figure 8.5). For instance, poverty rates are higher among blacks and Hispanics than Asians or whites. They are higher for the elderly or disabled and for those who are foreign born, as well as for women and children and single-parent households. And they are higher in the South and in inner cities and rural areas.

Social Welfare and Welfare Reform

Some of the most heated debates about the nature of poverty involve how or even whether society should help the poor. Some argue that government assistance helps poor people become self-supporting, others that it just fosters a dependence on aid and causes further problems.

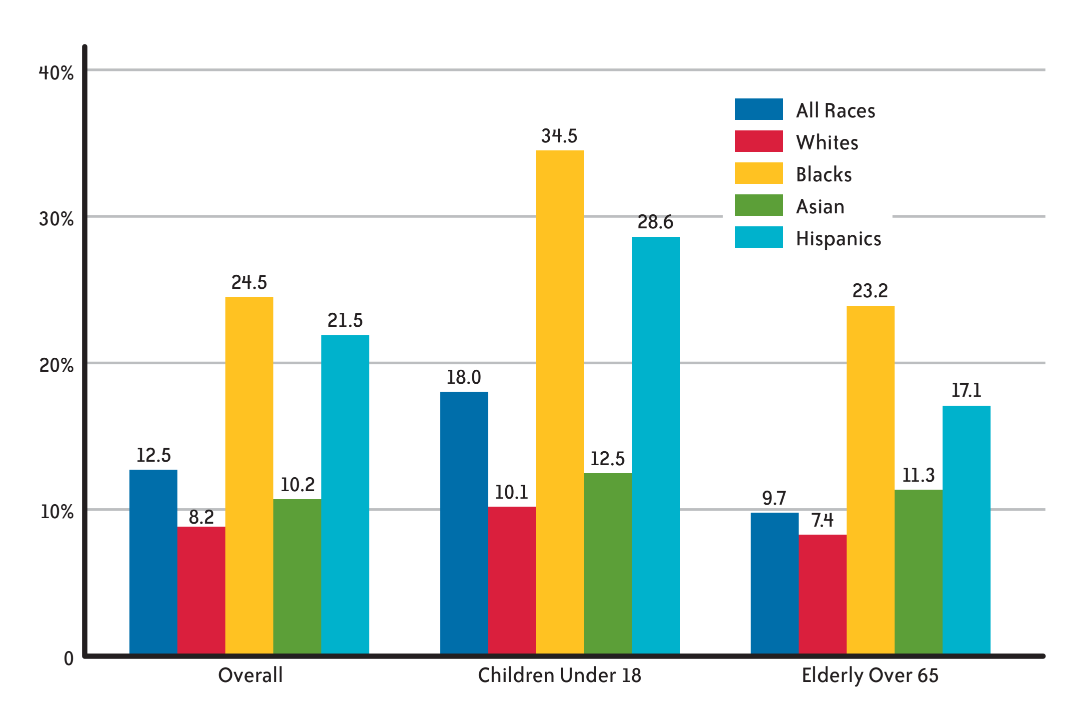


FIGURE 8.5 Poverty in the United States by Selected Characteristics, 2008

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau 2008f, 2008g

The idea behind the current American welfare state, which consists of such programs as Social Security, unemployment insurance, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and its successor, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), was first proposed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression of the 1930s. These programs, collectively called the New Deal, were a response to a national crisis and were meant to serve as a safety net for citizens, helping them in times of adversity or old age, poverty, or joblessness. A second wave of programs, such as Medicaid and Head Start, intended to solve a variety of social and economic problems, were proposed by President John F. Kennedy and instituted by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of his "Great Society" program in 1964.

The welfare system attempted to be fair by providing uniform, standard benefits to all the nation's poor without regard to their personal circumstances and with no time limit. Social Security and Medicaid lifted seniors out of poverty, and programs like Head Start and Upward Bound offered educational support for poor children. Food stamps improved nutrition for those with limited incomes, and job-training programs helped the poor gain marketable skills. By 1970, the poverty rate had declined from 22.2 percent to 12.6 percent (Califano 1999), the fastest it has ever dropped.

In the 1980s, political opinion turned against social welfare programs despite their successes. Critics claimed that these programs were responsible for creating a permanent underclass of people living off government checks—some receiving benefits they didn't deserve—and essentially discouraging them from seeking work. These critics are still voicing their disapproval today.

Americans in general have felt a deep ambivalence toward welfare (Mayer 1997). Polls show that a majority (55 percent) think poverty is a "big problem," yet addressing the issue is not among their highest priorities. They are divided too as to how to solve the problem. Few (18 percent) feel that there is too much being spent on assistance to the poor, but the remainder are split into those who feel that the country spends too little (38 percent) and those who feel that it spends about the right amount (36 percent). This may be because Americans are ambivalent about the causes of poverty: in 2001, 48 percent thought that the cause of poverty was "poor people not doing enough," while 45 percent attributed poverty to "circumstances beyond their control" (NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy poll 2001).

Most of the rhetoric surrounding welfare programs stems from concerns about federal spending. People commonly assume that welfare constitutes a large portion of the federal budget, when in fact welfare and unemployment together represented just over 11 percent of government spending in 2008, or $324 billion (Figure 8.6). Compare that with Social Security (about 21 percent of spending, or $608 billion) or defense and the war on terror (about 23 percent of spending, or $626 billion). But given these misconceptions, it makes sense that welfare abuse and reform have received so much press in the past 20 years.

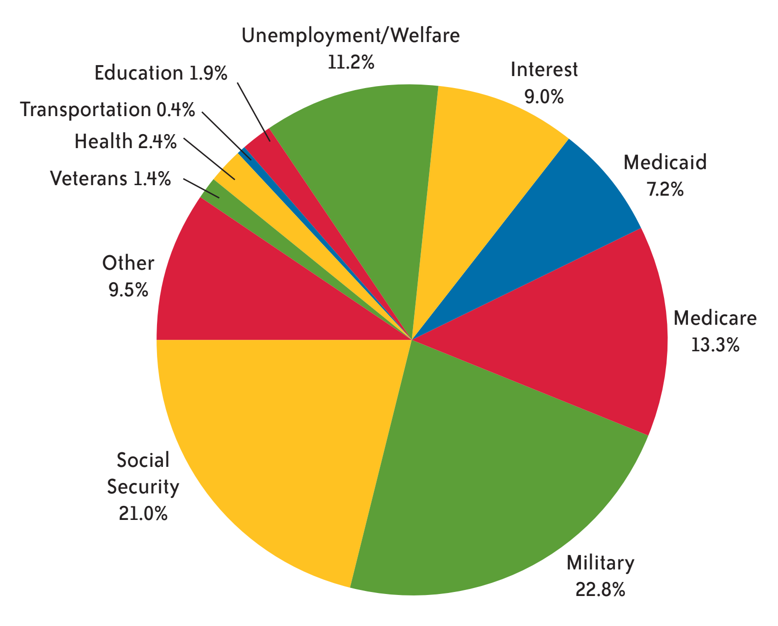


FIGURE 8.6 Federal Spending, 2008 Spending on welfare and unemployment combined represented just over 11 percent of the 2008 federal budget.

SOURCE: GPO Access 2008

In response to criticism of welfare programs, reform arrived in the 1990s. Under President Bill Clinton, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act was passed into law in 1996. Often referred to as the Welfare Reform Act, it ended the concept of "entitlements" by requiring recipients to find work within two years of receiving assistance and imposing a limit of five years as the total amount of time in which families could receive assistance. The act also decentralized the federal system of public assistance, allowing individual states to design their own programs, some of which would deny or reduce certain benefits, and impose their own criteria for eligibility. The rationale was to encourage people on welfare to take responsibility for working themselves out of poverty. In 2003, Congress approved changes to the act, requiring an even larger percentage of recipients to take jobs and work longer hours.

While welfare reform has been an economic success in terms of reducing the number of people on welfare, there is still a great deal to be learned about its success or failure in transforming the lives of the poor. Evidence suggests that moving from welfare to work does not increase income levels—in other words, federal assistance is merely replaced with an equally low-paying job, which has the effect of keeping families beneath the poverty line once they're off welfare. The reasons for this—the increased costs of child care, health insurance, and transportation—make it difficult for former welfare recipients to succeed outside the system (Hays 2003).

culture of poverty entrenched attitudes that can develop among poor communities and lead the poor to accept their fate rather than attempt to improve their lot

Studies are now being conducted to evaluate the consequences of welfare policy changes. One of the largest, "Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three-City Study," is a longitudinal study (one that follows the children of welfare over time) done in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio. A team of researchers from three different universities, including sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and economists, using methods as diverse as survey research, interviews, and in-depth ethnographies, sought to discover whether welfare reform was really helping to eradicate poverty and what kind of an impact welfare reform had on the lives of struggling families. They found that for families leaving welfare, their income rose only incrementally (less than 20 percent), and the impact on the lives of children (school achievement, mental health, etc.) was also only mildly positive (Hao and Cherlin 2004). So getting off welfare does bring positive results, but often those results aren't strong enough to serve as much of an incentive. It is likely that new policy recommendations will emerge in the future as a result of such research.

The "Culture of Poverty" Theory and Its Critics

Some argue that what keeps people poor is not public policy but rather the result of entrenched cultural attitudes. Oscar Lewis (1959) first promoted the idea of a **culture of poverty**

after he studied poor Hispanics in Mexico and the United States. Lewis suggested that the poor, because they were excluded from the mainstream, developed a way of life that was qualitatively different from that of middle-class societies and allowed them to cope with the dire circumstance of poverty. This way of life includes attitudes of resignation and fatalism, which lead the poor to accept their fate rather than trying to improve their lot. It also emphasizes immediate gratification, making it difficult for the poor to plan or save for the future or to join trade unions or community groups that might help them improve their situation. Once such a culture is formed, Lewis argued, it takes on a life of its own and is passed on from parents to children, leaving them ill-equipped to change.

The culture of poverty theory was later adopted by other social scientists (Banfield 1970) and applied to the American poor, particularly those in inner cities. Not surprisingly, though, the theory has been met with considerable controversy, in part because it suggests that there is little point in trying to eradicate poverty because it's more a problem of culture (attitudes, lifestyle, and behavior) than of economics. By focusing on individual character and personality, the theory tends to blame the victims of poverty for their own misfortunes while overlooking the force of their social conditions.

The tendency to see victims of social injustice as deserving of their fates is explained by what social psychologists call the **just-world hypothesis**. According to this argument, we have a strong need to believe that the world is orderly, predictable, and fair in order to achieve our goals in life. When we encounter situations that contradict this belief, we either act quickly to restore justice and order or persuade ourselves that no injustice has occurred. This can result in assuming that the victim has "asked for it" or deserves whatever has befallen her. This attitude is continually reinforced through the morality tales that are a ubiquitous part of our news and entertainment, which tell us that good is rewarded and evil punished (say, in a news story about a homeless man who returns a lost wallet full of cash to its owner, who then shares the money with him).

The just-world hypothesis, developed by Melvin Lerner (1965, 1980), was tested through a series of experiments that documented how people can convince themselves that others deserve what they get. In these experiments, cash prizes were randomly distributed to students completing the exact same tasks in the exact same way—observers, however, judged the cash recipients as the more deserving, harder workers. Other researchers (Rubin and Peplau 1975) have found that people with strong beliefs in a just world tend to "feel less of a need to engage in activities to change society or to alleviate the plight of social victims." In the face of poverty, many simply become apathetic. It is important to be aware of our own tendencies to follow such thinking, so that we might avoid becoming blind to others' misfortunes.

Another problem with the culture of poverty theory is that it lacks a certain sociological imagination. It fails to take into account the structural factors that shape culture and are part of the preexisting problem in which poor individuals find themselves. Dalton Conley, a sociologist at New York University, argues that to solve the problem of poverty, we must examine wealth as well (2002). A social system that allows extremes of both wealth and poverty (as ours does) reveals structural reasons why poverty persists, such as laws that protect the inheritances of the wealthy but provide few breaks for working families. Research like Conley's helps us understand that there are alternative explanations for why people are poor and even suggests that extreme wealth ought to be conceptualized as a social problem similar to that of extreme poverty.

just-world hypothesis argues that people have a deep need to see the world as orderly, predictable, and fair, which creates a tendency to view victims of social injustice as deserving of their fates

residential segregation the geographical separation of the poor from the rest of the population

The Invisibility of Poverty

Although we are used to seeing televised images of abject poverty from overseas—crying children with bloated bellies and spindly limbs in Asia, Africa, or Latin America—we rarely see similar images from the United States. While it may be true that few Americans are as poor as the starving Somalis or Bangladeshis, some 37.3 million Americans lived below the poverty line in 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau 2008c). That's almost 13 percent of the population of the wealthiest nation in the world. How can such large numbers of people remain hidden to their fellow Americans? What makes poverty invisible?

RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION One factor is **residential segregation**—the geographical isolation of the poor from the rest of the city (or in the case of the rural poor, from any neighbors at all). Such segregation often occurs along racial as well as socioeconomic lines, further exacerbating class divisions (Massey and Denton 1993). In the phrase "wrong side of the tracks," used to describe poverty-stricken neighborhoods, there is usually a racial connotation as well, since railroad tracks traditionally served as boundaries that kept



Residential Segregation
High-density housing projects frequently isolate the poor from the rest of the city.

black neighborhoods separated from white ones in the nineteenth century (Ananat 2005).

Residential segregation is accomplished most notably through public housing projects, which are typically high-density apartment complexes in urban areas, funded and managed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Living in these apartment complexes, many of which are in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods and are poorly maintained, can be dangerous as well as unpleasant.

Residential segregation is also exacerbated by the practice of "redlining," in which banks and mortgage lenders identify high-risk areas (usually poor or minority neighborhoods) and either refuse mortgages to applicants from those neighborhoods or offer loans at prohibitively high rates. Redlining keeps the poor from acquiring assets (like real estate) that might allow them to rise out of poverty and move to a more affluent neighborhood. Though illegal, redlining is still practiced today: in 2002, a major mortgage company, MidAmerica Bank, settled a redlining case in Chicago by agreeing to open more branches in poor and minority neighborhoods and to include poor and minority consumers in their advertising campaigns, which had previously targeted only buyers at higher income levels.

disenfranchisement the removal of the rights of citizenship through economic, political, or legal means

POLITICAL DISENFRANCHISEMENT The poor may remain invisible to the larger society because of their lack of political power, as well. **Disenfranchisement** is a correlate of poverty: the poor are less likely to vote or otherwise participate in political life (Kerbo and Gonzalez 2003). When everyday life is a struggle to make ends meet, it is difficult to muster the extra energy necessary to work for political change. The poor may also feel that the system has not served them; if the government ignores their interests, why bother to become involved? Because of their lack of involvement, the poor lack political clout and the resources to make their plight a high-profile political priority. Politicians at the local and national levels have little motivation to address their needs, because as a constituency the poor wield less power than such groups as senior citizens, "soccer moms," and small-business owners. When the poor do organize politically, even their successes may not be well known. One group, Mothers of East Los Angeles (whose motto includes the phrase "not economically rich, but culturally wealthy"), has been successfully protecting their neighborhood from environmental degradation and exploitation for 20 years. They have rebuffed plans to build a prison, toxic waste plants, and an oil pipeline near homes and schools in their community. But have you ever heard of them?

HOMELESSNESS In certain situations, the very poor are deliberately removed from public view. Police are sometimes



Marching for Welfare Rights During the Republican National Convention in 2000, the Kensington Welfare Rights Union protested against government poverty policies. The city of Philadelphia denied the group a permit to march, but they demonstrated anyway and attracted the attention of journalists, photographers, and politicians.

ordered to scour the streets, rousting the homeless and herding them out of sight, as they did in 1988 in New York City's Tompkins Square Park (an infamous riot ensued). High-profile occasions such as political conventions and major sporting events put a media spotlight on city streets. In the summer of 2000, for example, on the eve of the Republican National Convention, the city of Philadelphia denied a permit to a group of welfare rights protesters who wanted to demonstrate against government poverty policies. The hope was that in denying the permit, the group would not make an appearance on streets already crawling with politicians, demonstrators, journalists, and photographers. But the protesters marched anyway—with a police escort—and were able to make their voice heard despite the lack of official permission to do so.

Mostly, though, the poor and homeless remain invisible. We don't know exactly how many homeless live in the United States. The Census Bureau focuses its population counts on households, so the homeless living in long-term shelters may get counted, but not those on the streets. The current estimate is that about 1 percent of the U.S. population (over 2.5 million people) will experience homelessness at least once during a given year (Burt and Aron 2000).

Each year the city of New York attempts to measure the number of homeless men and women. Volunteers comb the streets in the overnight hours, making note of all those they find sleeping on park benches or in building stairwells. They do not, however, enter abandoned buildings or subway tunnels, where many of New York's homeless seek shelter. While the 2008 count showed a decrease in the homeless population (down to 3,306 from 3,755 in 2007), it can't be considered scientifically accurate (New York City Dept. of Homeless Services 2008). It does, however, help the city estimate its needs for homeless services in the coming year.

The homeless also remain invisible to most of us because of our own feelings of discomfort and guilt. John Coleman, a former college president and business executive, discovered this when he lived in poverty, if only temporarily, on the streets of Manhattan. Coleman went "undercover" as a homeless man for 10 days and found that the minute he shed his privileged identity, people looked at him differently—or not at all. During his days on the streets, Coleman passed by and made eye contact with his accountant, his landlord, and a coworker—each looked right through him, without recognition. But he was not invisible to everyone. Police officers often shook him awake to get him moving from whatever meager shelter he had found for the night. A waiter at a diner took one look at him and forced him to pay up front for his 99-cent breakfast special. Other homeless men, though, showed him kindness and generosity (Coleman 1983).

Changing the World

Michael Moore's *Roger & Me*

Michael Moore was born in Flint, Michigan. His father worked for General Motors (GM), and his uncle took part in the landmark 1936 sit-down strike at the plant that led to the birth of the United Auto Workers (UAW), a powerful labor union. In the early 1980s, General Motors, Flint's primary source of employment, announced a series of plant closings that would eliminate more than 30,000 jobs. The effect was disastrous: huge swaths of the town were boarded up, crime rates soared, and suicides and alcoholism increased, while at the same time GM posted almost $5 billion in profits.

Moore, originally a print journalist with no experience in film, decided to make a documentary on the economic implosion of a small Midwestern industrial town. Friends gave him some pointers on documentary making, and the rest he learned as he went. The final result, *Roger & Me*, chronicles his far-fetched attempt to obtain an interview with Roger Smith, the CEO of General Motors, and ask him about the human cost of the massive layoffs. Moore tries to get Smith to spend the day with him, driving around Flint in a van, surveying the economically decimated town together. He wanted Smith to get to know some of the locals, like Fred the eviction man and the woman who raises rabbits (either as pets or for meat).

To finance the film's eventual $160,000 budget, Moore sold his house and held weekly Bingo games to raise cash. Political activist Ralph Nader, an old adversary of the auto industry, donated a little money and some office space. When the film was finished in 1989, the impossible happened: Moore sent it off to the film festival circuit, where it was an immediate hit. Critics loved it, and Warner Brothers beat out stiff competition to release it nationally. Even more improbably, the film became a huge success commercially, an almost unheard-of feat for a political documentary.

Roger & Me, more than just good entertainment, is also good sociology. A more traditional documentary might have focused solely on the actions of General Motors and left out the ways that Flint residents tried to cope with their economic problems—but that wouldn't have required much of a sociological imagination. *Roger* isn't just a movie about General Motors or about the way large corporations work, and it isn't just a movie about what life was like in Flint, Michigan, in the 1980s. It's about all these things and, more importantly, about the connections between them. When Moore shows a family being evicted on Christmas Eve and then quickly cuts to Roger Smith giving a speech to industry, he is trying to show the connection between "personal troubles" and "social structure."



Roger and Me Michael Moore, Rhonda Britton (Flint's Bunny Lady), and Fred Ross (a repo man) in front of a Buick ad.

Moore hoped that if he made people laugh (and the movie is very funny, especially when he is repeatedly kicked out of Smith's office building), the film's images would stick in their minds. He also hoped that if he could show how the very structure of opportunity had collapsed in Flint and similar American towns, then people might be forced to reconsider society's economic and political institutions. In short, he hoped to make a film that would help to explain how poverty is created and in so doing perhaps inspire people to demand that things be done differently.

To whom are the poor visible? Those who work with them: case workers, social service providers, government bureaucrats, volunteers and charity workers, clergy, cops, business owners (including those who may not want to deal with the poor, as well as those who may exploit them). And now, you.

With a sociological perspective, you can now see the effects of social stratification everywhere you turn. And when you recognize the multiple, complex causes of poverty—such as limited educational and job opportunities, stagnating wages, economic downturns, racism, mental illness, and substance abuse—it will no longer be as simple to consider each individual responsible for his or her own plight. Finally, the sociological perspective will give you the ability to imagine possible solutions to the problems associated with poverty—solutions that focus on large-scale social changes as well as individual actions, including your own. Don't let poverty remain invisible.

Inequality and the Ideology of the American Dream

Ask almost anyone about the American Dream and they are likely to mention some of the following: owning your own home; having a good marriage and great kids; finding a good job that you enjoy; being able to afford nice vacations; having a big-screen TV, nice clothes, or season tickets to your team's home games. For most Americans, the dream also means that all people, no matter how humble their beginnings, can succeed in whatever they set out to do if they work hard enough. In other words, a poor boy or girl could grow up to become president of the United States, an astronaut, a professional basketball player, a captain of industry, or a movie star.

One problem with the American Dream, however, is that it doesn't always match reality. It's more of an ideology: a belief system that explains and justifies some sort of social arrangement, in this case America's social class hierarchy. The ideology of the American Dream legitimizes stratification by reinforcing the idea that everyone has the same chance to get ahead and that success or failure depends on the person (Hochschild 1996). Inequality is presented as a system of incentives and rewards for achievement. If we can credit anyone who does succeed, then logically we must also blame anyone who fails. The well-socialized American buys into this belief system, without recognizing its structural flaws. We are caught in what Marx would call false consciousness, the inability to see the ways in which we may be oppressed.



The American Dream? Oprah Winfrey's meteoric rise from poverty to immense wealth is the classic American Dream story. However, her experience is the exception, not the rule. In fact, most Americans will experience much more modest upward mobility, if any at all.

Nevertheless, it's not easy to dismiss the idea of the American Dream, especially when there are so many high-profile examples. Take, for instance, Oprah Winfrey. Born in Mississippi in 1954, Winfrey endured a childhood of abject poverty. Fifty years later, *Forbes* magazine listed her as number 215 of the 400 richest Americans, with a personal wealth of $1.3 billion. Not only is she the highest-paid black female, she is also one of the most highly paid entertainers of all time. She is widely praised for her achievements as talk-show host and philanthropist and viewed as a symbol of the American Dream. The problem is, we tend to think of her as representing the rule rather than the exception. For most Americans, the rags-to-riches upward mobility she has achieved is very unrealistic.

Though popular opinion and rhetoric espouse the American Dream ideology, or that the United States is a **meritocracy** (a system in which rewards are distributed based on merit), sociologists find contrary evidence. In fact, no matter how hard they work or seek a good education, most people will make little movement at all. And the degree of mobility they do achieve can depend on a person's ethnicity, class status, or gender rather than merit. For example, whites are more likely to experience upward mobility than persons of color (T. Davis 1995), and married women are more likely to experience upward mobility than nonmarried women (Li and Singelmann 1998). Immigrant persons of color are the most likely to experience downward social mobility (McCall 2001).

Although the American Dream tends to promote consumerism as a way to achieve "the good life," the fact is that chasing after it has left us feeling less secure and satisfied—not to mention less wealthy—than in previous generations (De Graaf et al. 2002). Some pundits suggest that we have lost focus on the original meaning of the American Dream,

meritocracy a system in which rewards are distributed based on merit

simplicity movement a loosely knit movement that opposes consumerism and encourages people to work less, earn less, and spend less, in accordance with nonmaterialistic values

that our increasing obsession with the idea of "more (or newer or bigger) is better" is leading to more debt, less free time, and greater discontent. Americans now carry 200 percent more credit card debt than they did in 1990 (Susan Walker 2004), and an Ohio State University study recently reported that Americans have less free time and feel more rushed than they did 30 years ago (Sayer and Mattingly 2006).

A countervailing trend in American life, however, sometimes referred to as the **simplicity movement**, rejects rampant consumerism and seeks to reverse some of its consequences for the individual, for society, and for the planet. This movement, a backlash against the traditional American Dream, encourages people to "downshift" by working less, earning less, and spending less in order to put their lifestyles in sync with their (nonmaterialistic) values (Schor 1999). What does this mean in practice? Growing your own vegetables, perhaps, or riding your bike to work, recycling and composting, and spending more time with friends and family and less time commuting, spending money, or watching TV.

DATA WORKSHOP



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Advertising and the American Dream

We are surrounded by advertising, which aims not only to give us information about products but also to create and stimulate a buying public with demands for an ever-increasing array of goods and services. Advertising shapes our consciousness and tells us what to dream and how to pursue those dreams. It provides us with a concept of the good life and tells us that it's available to everyone. Advertising equates shopping and acquisition with emotional fulfillment, freedom, fun, happiness, security, and self-satisfaction.

And the sales pitch seems to be working. Like no other generation, today's 18- to 34-year-olds have grown up with a culture of debt—a product of easy credit, a booming economy, and expensive lifestyles. They often live from paycheck to paycheck and use credit cards and loans to finance restaurant meals, high-tech toys, and new cars that they really can't afford. Many are slipping into a troubling downward financial spiral. Policy analysts Tamara Draut and Javier Silva, in their 2004 study called "Generation Broke," found that in 2001 the average credit card debt among adults aged 25 to 34 was $4,088; the average for those aged 18 to 24 was $2,985. Some 15–20 percent of all young adults are in debt hardship, where monthly debt payments reach 40 percent or more of household income, and they have the second-highest rates of bankruptcy of any age group (Draut and Silva 2004).

In this Data Workshop, you will evaluate some advertisements in terms of the ideology of the American Dream. You will use existing sources to do a content analysis of the ads (see Chapter 3 for a review of the research method). To start your research, find three or more ads from magazines, newspapers, websites, or other sources. Look for ads that are of interest to your particular age group or that are selling the idea of the "good life."

Consider the following questions for each ad.

- Whom is the message intended for?
- What product or service is being advertised?
- In addition to a product or service, what else are the advertisers trying to sell?
- How does the message make you feel? Does it play on your emotions or sense of self-worth? If so, in what ways?
- Does the ad "work"? Would you like to buy the product? Why or why not?

More generally:

- How does advertising affect your life and buying habits?
- What ads have a strong effect on you? Why?
- What is the lure of shopping and material possessions?
- What kinds of pressures do you feel to keep up with the material possessions of your friends, neighbors, or coworkers?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Bring your ads to class, and discuss your answers to the questions above with other students in small groups. Compare and contrast each other's contributions.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay discussing your general thoughts on consumption and the American Dream. Apply these thoughts to your conclusions about the specific ads you chose.

Closing Comments

Social stratification is all about power. Stratification systems, like SES, allocate different types of social power, such as wealth, political influence, and occupational prestige, and do so in fundamentally unequal ways. These inequalities are part of both the larger social structure and our everyday interactions. In the following chapters, we will examine other systems of stratification, namely, race and ethnicity, and sex, gender, and sexual orientation. While we separate these topics for organizational purposes, they are not experienced as separate in our everyday lives. We are women or men, working class or upper class, black or white, gay or straight simultaneously. Our experiences of these social categories are intertwined, as we will see.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **Social Stratification and Inequality** Every society has some form of social stratification dividing the population into groups with differential access to resources and prestige; these groups may be based on different criteria (such as race, class, and gender). This fundamental source of inequality is persistent; social status tends to be passed along by parents to their children, even in systems where status is not formally inherited. Stratification also creates a set of beliefs about the different groups within a society.
- **Systems of Stratification** Historically there have been three major types of social stratification: slavery, caste systems, and social class. Although slavery and caste-related segregation are not officially practiced today, both systems persist. However, social class, the primarily economic system of stratification associated with capitalism, has become increasingly prevalent.
- **Social Classes in the United States** Most Americans claim to be middle class, even when their life experiences and backgrounds suggest otherwise. This helps sociologists understand Americans' class consciousness; more precise definitions allow sociologists to study how class affects our lives. Unlike in a system of slavery or castes, the borders between the classes are not sharply defined, and it is useful to think of class as a continuum rather than strictly divided groups.
- This text uses a six-part model of the U.S. class system: upper (capitalist) class, upper-middle class, middle class, working (lower-middle) class, working poor, and underclass. Many individuals display status inconsistency; that is, they possess characteristics associated with more than one class.
- **Theories of Social Class** Karl Marx believed there were two classes in capitalist societies: the capitalists (or bourgeoisie), who owned the means of production, and the workers (or proletariat), who possessed only their labor, which they were forced to sell for wages. In Marx's model, only economic relationships matter, and he believed social inequality would grow as the workers continued to be exploited. Modified versions of this theory remain popular among sociologists. Max Weber offered a similar model that also accounted for cultural factors. He argued that class status was the product of three components: wealth, power, and prestige.
- More recently, Pierre Bourdieu has attempted to explain social reproduction, the stability of social classes across generations. According to his theory, children inherit not only wealth but also cultural capital: the tastes, habits, expectations, and other cultural dispositions that help them to take on their parents' class status. Symbolic interactionists examine the ways we notice status differences and categorize ourselves and others accordingly. As Erving Goffman pointed out, our clothing, speech, gestures, possessions, friends, and activities all provide information about our socioeconomic status.
- **Socioeconomic Status and Life Chances** Belonging to a certain social class has profound consequences in all areas of life. Members of different social classes set and achieve different educational goals, work at different types of jobs, and receive different levels of quality in their medical care. People tend to marry someone whose social and cultural backgrounds are similar to their own, in part because they are more likely to encounter people like themselves.

- **Defining Poverty** In the United States, the federal poverty line—an absolute measure of annual income—is frequently used to determine who is categorized as poor. However, this measure of poverty is often criticized because it classifies those with only marginally higher incomes as nonpoor and ignores regional variations in the cost of living. In America there are persistent calls to scale back welfare, often under the mistaken assumption that it constitutes a large percentage of the federal budget. Residential segregation, political disenfranchisement, and the use of law enforcement to control the homeless render poverty invisible to many Americans.
- **Inequality and the American Dream** Though we aren't always aware of it, the United States has a distinct ideology that explains and justifies our social system. The American Dream—that anyone can achieve material success if they try hard enough—has been criticized for several reasons. For example, it justifies the class hierarchy by reinforcing the idea that success depends only on effort, suggesting that the poor are simply lazy. It also encourages consumerism and valorizes material wealth, leaving Americans with less free time and more debt, a trend that the simplicity movement has begun to fight.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Think about your own class status. Is it consistent across the criteria that make up socioeconomic status (income, wealth, education, occupation, and power)? Or are you an example of status inconsistency?
2. Max Weber theorized that there is more to class than wealth and advocated classifying socioeconomic status according to power and prestige. Why do we need these additional elements? Can you think of a job that brings more wealth than power? How about one that brings little wealth but lots of prestige?
3. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the cultural tools we inherit from our parents can be very important in trying to gain economic assets. What sort of cultural capital did you inherit? Has it ever helped you materially? Have you ever done something to acquire more cultural capital?
4. Erving Goffman says we "read" other people through social interaction to get a sense of their class status. What sort of clues can tell you about a person's social class within 30 seconds of meeting her?
5. People of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to encounter the criminal justice system, both as perpetrators and as victims of crime. Many people believe this is because the poor are more criminally minded. What are some other explanations?
6. Sociologists know that people are more likely to marry someone with a social and cultural background similar to their own, largely because those are the people we tend to encounter. Add up the people you know on a first-name basis who come from a different class than you according to the six-part definition of U.S. social class.
7. The United States considers itself a meritocracy with an open class system. What kinds of structural factors in American society make vertical social mobility more difficult? Do these factors apply to everyone in society or just certain groups?
8. Are you aware of anyone within your community who suffers from absolute deprivation? If not, do you think you just live in a lucky community, or are there other factors that make the poor invisible?
9. When you picture the good life, what do you see? If you had a choice between making more money or having more free time, which would you pick? How much of your leisure time involves spending money or consuming? What does this tell you about the ideology of the American Dream?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

The Global Rich List (www.globalrichlist.com). Find out how your income compares to earnings worldwide. From the site's authors: "[W]e gauge how rich we are by looking upwards at those who have more than us. This makes us feel poor. We wanted to do something which would help people understand, in real terms, where they stand globally."

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. A neo-Marxist explanation for the way that inequality is structured globally and how this changes the functioning of power. Interestingly, while Michael Hardt is a professor of literature at Duke University, Antonio Negri is an inmate at Rebibbia Prison in Rome, convicted in the 1970s of trying to overthrow the Italian state, a charge he has always denied.

Harrison, Bennett, and Barry Bluestone. 1988. *The Great U-Turn: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarization of America*. New York: Basic Books. A compelling analysis of the increasing polarization of the American economy and the specific ways that the wealthy protect their assets while the middle class and the poor are increasingly hard-pressed.

The House of Yes. 1997. Dir. Mark Waters. Miramax. A darkly comic peek at cultural capital in a wealthy, dysfunctional family. When Marty Pascal attempts to get married, his jealously possessive twin sister mocks his fiancée for lacking refinement and for being from Pennsylvania, "a state that's in your way when you want to go someplace else."

Katz, Michael B. 1986. *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*. New York: Basic Books. Explores the ways in which the welfare system has remained in place, despite being consistently unpopular throughout American history.

Krog, Antjie. 1999. *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*. New York: Times Books. The story of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established to deal with the crimes committed under apartheid. The commission powerfully gives voice to those who suffered in a racially segregated South Africa, while the author, an Afrikaner, also tries to find an honorable way to live in a country still deeply divided along racial lines.

People Like Us: Social Class in America (www.pbs.org/peoplelikeus). Created by Louis Alvarez and Andrew Kolker. A documentary that uses many individuals' life experiences to explore the American class system, which most of us have trouble talking about.

Pollin, Robert, and Stephanie Luce. 1998. *The Living Wage: Building a Fair Economy*. New York: New Press. As part of the ongoing effort to document the struggles of the working poor, Pollin and Luce document a nationwide movement for economic justice that argues that paying a living wage is good for employers, cities, and employees.

Schor, Juliet B. 1999. *The Overspent American: Why We Want What We Don't Need*. New York: HarperCollins. A breezily written indictment of America's obsession with designer clothes, athletic shoes, luxury cars, and other high-status consumer goods.

Twine, France Winddance. 1998. *Racism in a Racial Democracy: The Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. An ethnographic study of the way that racial segregation in Brazil is disguised by a class-based ideology.



CHAPTER 9

Race and Ethnicity as Lived Experience

Tiger Woods is often hailed as the person who opened up the field of professional golf to African Americans. But Woods doesn't describe himself as black: he's "Cablinasian," a term he coined to describe his multiracial background (which includes Caucasian, black, American Indian, and Asian American ancestries). In 2002, Halle Berry became the first African American ever to win the Academy Award for best actress. As she tearfully accepted the statuette on stage, the camera cut to her mother sitting in the audience, beaming with pride at her daughter's accomplishment—and unmistakably white. Blonde actress Heather Locklear is a descendant of a group known as the Lumbees: an isolated triracial community in North Carolina that is part Caucasian, part African American, and part Tuscarora Indian.

Despite America's record of racial discrimination and segregation, there have always been multiracial people in its history, beginning with the European settlers who mixed with Native Americans and black slaves alike (Clinton and Gillespie 1997; Brooks 2002). More and more, we are recognizing and celebrating our multiracial heritage. In 2000, the Census Bureau gave Americans the opportunity for the first time to check multiple boxes to identify their race, thus creating 63 different racial categories. Approximately 7 million, or 2.4 percent of the population, took advantage of the new option. And the number identifying themselves as multiracial will only grow, according to the bureau: by 2050, the population of multiracial identities will double to about 14 million. As the United States is a nation of immigrants (some involuntary), it is only logical that the separate lineages of the American population would eventually meld. We might, therefore, wonder: will race continue to be as important in the future as it has been in the past? In this chapter, we will examine the sociological understandings of race, which will provide us with the insights we need to answer this question.

SocIndex

Then and Now

1870: Number of African American senators: 1

1970: Number of African American senators: 1

2008: Number of African American senators: 1

Here and There

United States: Most Native Americans were granted citizenship in 1924

Canada: Most Native Americans were granted citizenship in 1956

This and That

In 2006, the percentage of American youth aged 15–25 who believe that it is their responsibility to get involved to make things better for society:

Hispanic: 45%
African American: 44%
Asian: 43%
White: 35%

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

Our goal in this chapter is for you to acquire a fundamental understanding of race and ethnicity as socially constructed categories. While each is based on traits we may see as biological, such as skin color or facial features, the meanings attached to race and ethnicity are created, maintained, and modified over time through social processes in which we all take part.

When a society categorizes people based on their race and ethnicity (and all societies do), it creates a system of stratification that leads to inequality. Society's resources—wealth, power, privilege, opportunity—are distributed according to these categories, and this perpetuates inequalities that are all too familiar here in the United States. We also hope you will come to understand the importance of race and ethnicity in forming individual identity. Our racial identities have profound effects on our sense of self, and our bonds to other people may be based on shared identities—or may transcend those racial categories entirely.

Defining Race and Ethnicity

Race and *ethnicity* are words we use so often in everyday speech that we might not think we need a definition of either. But people tend to use the words interchangeably, as if they mean essentially the same thing. There is, however, a significant difference between commonsense notions of race and ethnicity and what social scientists have to say about them.

The idea of different races as belonging to distinguishable categories has existed for hundreds of years. In the nineteenth century, biologists came up with a schema that grouped humans into three races: Negroid, Mongoloid, and Caucasoid (corresponding roughly to black, Asian, and white). It was believed that each race was characterized by its own biological makeup, separate and distinct from the others. Modern scientists, however, possess advanced tools for examining race in a much more sophisticated way. What they have found, ironically, is that there are no "pure" races, that the lines between races are blurry rather than fixed. A person who looks white will inevitably have biological material from other races, as will someone who looks black. There is also no such thing as a "superior" race, as race itself is not the reason that different groups might display positive or negative characteristics (such as intelligence, athleticism, or artistic ability). Furthermore, there is greater genetic diversity *within* racial populations than between them. So within the Asian population, members differ more from each other (Koreans from Chinese, for example) than they do from whites. From a biological standpoint, the difference between someone with type O blood and someone with type A blood is much more significant than the differences between a dark-skinned and a light-skinned person. And yet blood types have no correlation to race at all.

race a socially defined category based on real or perceived biological differences between groups of people

ethnicity a socially defined category based on common language, religion, nationality, history, or another cultural factor

New genetic testing technologies seem to hold out the prospect of accurately identifying biological differences between racial groups—some "ancestry testing" services purport to be able to identify clients' genetic and geographic origins down to the region, village or tribe. However precise or imprecise such conclusions may be, they overlook the fact that all humans, whatever racial categories they seem to inhabit, are 99.9 percent genetically identical. And of that remaining 0.1 percent of our genetic material, only 15 percent of its variation occurs between geographically distinct groups. In other words, there's not enough "wiggle room" in the human genome for race to be a genetic trait (*Harvard Magazine*, 2008).

Sociologists, then, have come to understand **race** as a social category, based on real or perceived biological differences between groups of people. Race is more meaningful to us on a social level than it is on a biological level (Montagu 1998). Actress Heather Locklear certainly "looks white," and you have probably perceived her in that way, but in some Southern states in 1925, she could just as easily have been considered black or Native American. Does knowing Locklear's racial background now make you think of her in a different way?

Ethnicity is another social category that is applied to a group with a shared ancestry or cultural heritage. The Amish, for instance, are a distinct ethnic group in American society, linked by a common heritage that includes language, religion, and history; the Amish people, with few exceptions, are also white. The Jewish people, on the other hand, contrary to what the Nazis and other white supremacists may believe, are an ethnic group but not a race. The stereotypical image is challenged when we see a blonde, blue-eyed Jew from Scandinavia or a black Ethiopian Jew.

As an example of the social construction of race and ethnicity, let's look at the evidence documenting the historical changes in the boundaries of the category "white." In the early 1900s, native-born Americans, who were frequently Protestant, did not consider recent Irish, Italian, or Jewish immigrants to be white and restricted where these groups could live and work (Ignatiev 1996; Brodkin 1999). Such housing discrimination forced new immigrants to cluster in urban neighborhoods or ghettos. After World War II, how-

ever, as the second generation of Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants reached adulthood, the importance of ethnic identity declined and skin color became the main way to differentiate between who was white and who was not. Today, the question is whether people of Middle Eastern descent are white. In the post–9/11 climate, Arabs and Muslims have been identified as racially and ethnically distinct in significant and even harmful ways. While these groups possess a range of skin colors and facial features, it may be their symbolic labeling in these difficult times that makes them "nonwhite."

"Ethnic Options": Symbolic and Situational Ethnicity

How do we display our racial and ethnic group membership? We may do so in a number of ways: through dress, language, food, religious practices, preferences in music, art, or literature, even the projects we find interesting and the topics we pursue at school. Sometimes these practices make our group membership obvious to others; sometimes they don't. White ethnics like Irish Americans and Italian Americans, for example, can actually choose when and how they display their ethnic group membership.

One way group membership is displayed is through **symbolic ethnicity**, enactments of ethnic identity that occur only on special occasions. For example, most Irish Americans have been so fully assimilated for several generations that their Irish ancestry may not matter much to them on a daily basis. But on St. Patrick's Day (especially in cities like Boston and New York), displays of Irish identity can be pretty overwhelming! Parades, hats, "Kiss me, I'm Irish" buttons, green clothing, green beer (and in Chicago, a green river!), corned beef and cabbage—all are elements of symbolic ethnicity. Similar ethnic displays occur on holidays such as Passover, Cinco de Mayo, and Nouruz.

symbolic ethnicity an ethnic identity that is only relevant on specific occasions and does not significantly impact everyday life

situational ethnicity an ethnic identity that can be either displayed or concealed depending on its usefulness in a given situation

Another way we can show group membership is through **situational ethnicity**, when we deliberately assert our ethnicity in some situations while downplaying it in others. Situational ethnicity involves a kind of cost-benefit analysis that symbolic ethnicity does not: we need to appraise each situation to determine whether or not it favors our ethnicity. For example, Dr. Ferris's Lebanese ancestry never mattered much, outside her own family, when she lived in Southern California. In fact, it was often something she felt she should downplay, given a political climate in which people of Arabic background were sometimes viewed with suspicion. But when she moved to Peoria, Illinois, she discovered that this small city had a relatively large population of Lebanese



Mulberry Street at the Turn of the Century In the early 1900s, Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants were not considered "whites." Because of residential segregation, new immigrants poured into densely populated neighborhoods like this one on New York's Lower East Side where they had little choice but to live in squalid tenements and work in sweatshops.

Global Perspective

Heritage Tourism: Getting in Touch with Our Roots

As global travel becomes easier, faster, and more affordable, a phenomenon called heritage tourism has been on the rise. Heritage tourism is related to the idea of the pilgrimage—a journey to a geographical location of significance to one's religion. Examples of traditional pilgrimages include the *hajj*, an excursion to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, which is required of all Muslims once in their lifetime. Catholics may travel to the Vatican or to other important sites such as the grotto and sanctuary at Lourdes in France or the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. But heritage tourism is less about religion and more about the cultural legacies of different racial and ethnic groups. Members of racial and ethnic groups who now live outside the countries of their ancestors (such as African Americans or Irish Americans) are sometimes attracted by the possibility of traveling to the "old country," and tourism ministries worldwide market their countries and cultures as must-see places for members of the diaspora—displaced peoples who may have emigrated generations ago. Here are a few examples of heritage tourism campaigns from around the world:

Ireland

The U.S. Census reports that 10 percent of the American population—or 30 million people—claimed Irish heritage in 2000. That's a lot of potential tourists, and the official Irish tourist bureau caters specifically to those who wish to investigate their Irish ancestry. The tourism industry in Ireland encourages people of Irish descent to take tours that trace their family's heritage. The tourism office, in association with the Irish Genealogical Project, entices travelers to visit Irish Family History Foundation Centres around the country and promises "a personal and emotional journey . . . of discovery" as travelers discover the roots of their family tree.

Israel

For many contemporary Jews, their Jewish identity is as much ethnic as it is religious, and the existence of a Jewish state may have an impact on their travel plans. For example,



Ethnic Options We can display group membership by embracing ethnic identity on special occasions like St. Patrick's Day or Cinco de Mayo (symbolic ethnicity) or in special situations (situational ethnicity).

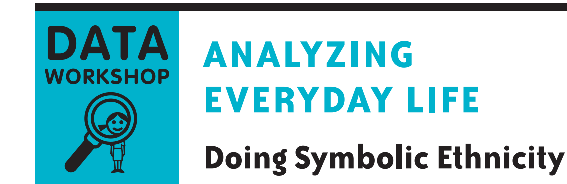
Israel's Ministry of Tourism encourages American Jewish families to consider traveling to Israel for their children's Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebrations. Ceremonies can be held at any of a number of well-known historical locations such as the Western Wall or the Masada, and Bar or Bat Mitzvah visitors may also tour the important religious, cultural, and political sites of Jerusalem as part of their holiday. Parents and politicians alike hope that vacations such as these will strengthen the children's connection to their Jewish heritage and begin a process of attachment to Israel itself that may ultimately lead to "making *aliyah*," or moving there permanently.

Ghana

Because of the historical brutalities of slavery, it is often difficult for African Americans to pinpoint their cities or countries of ancestral origin—but since most African slaves were taken from West Africa, some countries in that region have begun exploring the touristic implications of slavery's tragic legacy. Ghanaian tourism officials, for example, want the far-flung "diasporan" descendants of American, European, and Caribbean slaves to think of Africa as home and to consider making a pilgrimage to the land of their ancestors. They offer tours that focus on slave-trade sites like the forts in which newly enslaved Africans were imprisoned before being shipped to the New World (which most visitors find both deeply moving and disturbing). But they also entertain visitors and educate them about Ghanaian culture and customs with colorful festivals, dancing, and feasting. Ghanaian officials hope that some visitors will choose to make Ghana their permanent home, offering special visas for diasporans to make it easy to travel to and from the homeland.

descent and that the mayor, a city councilman, the state senator, the congressman, local business, arts, and religious leaders, and prominent families were all Lebanese. This suddenly made Dr. Ferris's ethnicity a valuable asset in a way that it had never been before. She received a good deal of social support and made new friends based on shared revelations of ethnic group membership. In the case of situational ethnicity, we see how larger social forces can govern the identities we choose—if we have a choice.

Neither situational nor symbolic ethnicity is available to those who are visibly nonmainstream, whatever that may look like in a given society. In the United States, this generally means that nonwhites find themselves in fewer situations where they have a choice about whether to display their group membership (although this may eventually change as we become a "majority minority" nation). As sociologist Mary Waters says, "The social and political consequences of being Asian or Hispanic or black are not, for the most part, symbolic, nor are they voluntary. They are real, unavoidable, and sometimes hurtful" (1990, p. 156).



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Doing Symbolic Ethnicity

Choose a setting where you can watch people "doing" ethnicity. For instance, you can go to a St. Patrick's Day parade, if your city hosts one, or attend an ethnic festival of some sort (such as St. Anthony's Feast Day in Boston's Italian North End or Los Angeles's annual African Marketplace). Or just visit one of your city's ethnic neighborhoods: stroll through an Italian market in South Philadelphia, or shop the streets of Chicago's Ukrainian Village, Greektown, or Pilsen (a Mexican American neighborhood). If you think your town is too tiny to have any ethnic diversity, think again: even minuscule Postville, Iowa (population 1,500), includes a large Hasidic Jewish population, with significant clusters of Mexican, Guatemalan, Ukrainian, Nigerian, Bosnian, and Czech immigrants. You may even find an appropriate

setting on your college campus or at one of your own family gatherings.

Once you have chosen a setting, join in the activities around you while at the same time carefully observing how the other participants display their ethnic membership. As part of your observation, consider the following.

- What are participants wearing? Traditional ethnic costumes, contemporary T-shirts, other symbols displaying their ethnic identity?
- What kind of music is being played, and what types of foods or crafts are available?
- Are different languages being spoken? If so, by whom, and in what situations?
- What are the differences in the activities of adults and children? men and women? members and visitors?
- Listen for snatches of conversation in which members explain such traditions as buying a goldfish on the first day of spring (Iranian), wrapping and tying a tamale (Mexican), or wearing the claddagh ring (Irish).

Record your observations, and bring them back into the classroom for discussion and analysis. There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare written notes that you can refer to in class. Discuss your experience with other students in a small group. Consider all the questions and points above.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay describing your observations and answering the questions in this workshop. Ask yourself the same questions about your own ethnic identity as you did about the people you observed. Do you have the option to display your ethnicity in some situations and withhold it in others? Why or why not? How do you decide whether/when/how to do this? What kind of cost-benefit analysis do you use? What role do ethnic and racial stereotypes play in this process? And how are these displays received by others?

What Is a Minority?

minority group members of a social group that is systematically denied the same access to power and resources available to society's dominant groups but who are not necessarily fewer in number than the dominant groups

A minority is commonly thought of as a group that's smaller in numbers than the dominant group. Thus, most Americans would say that in the United States, whites are a majority while African Americans, Asians, Hispanics/Latinos, and Native Americans are minorities, because whites outnumber each of these other groups. In South Africa, however, blacks dramatically outnumber whites by a ratio of 7 to 1, yet before the 1994 election of President Nelson Mandela, whites controlled the country while blacks occupied the lowest status in that society. California provides us with a different kind of example. In 2005 the Census Bureau reported that whites made up less than 45 percent of the state's population, whereas other ethnic groups (Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans) when added together constituted a majority of 56 percent (Longley 2005). California, then, is technically a "majority minority" state: whites are less than half the population but still remain the dominant group in terms of power, resources, and representation in social institutions (Texas and New Mexico are also "majority minority" states). Hispanics/Latinos continue to be underrepresented in the University of California system, as both students and faculty, as well as in the state government and as business owners. They are, however, overrepresented in prisons, in poverty counts, and as victims of violent crimes.

As sociologists, then, we must recognize that minority status is not just about numbers—it's about social inequalities. Sociologists define a **minority group** as people who are recognized as belonging to a social category (here either a racial or an ethnic group) and who suffer from unequal treatment as a result of that status. A minority group is denied the access to power and resources generally accorded to others in the dominant groups. Members of a minority group are likely to perceive of themselves as targets of collective discrimination (Wirth 1945).

Membership in a minority group may serve as a kind of "master status," overriding any other status (such as gender or age). Members may be subjected to racist beliefs about the group as a whole and thus suffer from a range of social disadvantages. Unequal and unfair treatment, as well as lack of access to power and resources, typically generates a strong sense of common identity and solidarity among members of minority groups. Perhaps because of this sense of identification, minorities also tend to practice high rates of in-group marriage (endogamy), although the percentage of mixed-race couples in America continues to grow.

Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination

In order for social inequality to persist, the unequal treatment that minority groups suffer must be supported by the dominant

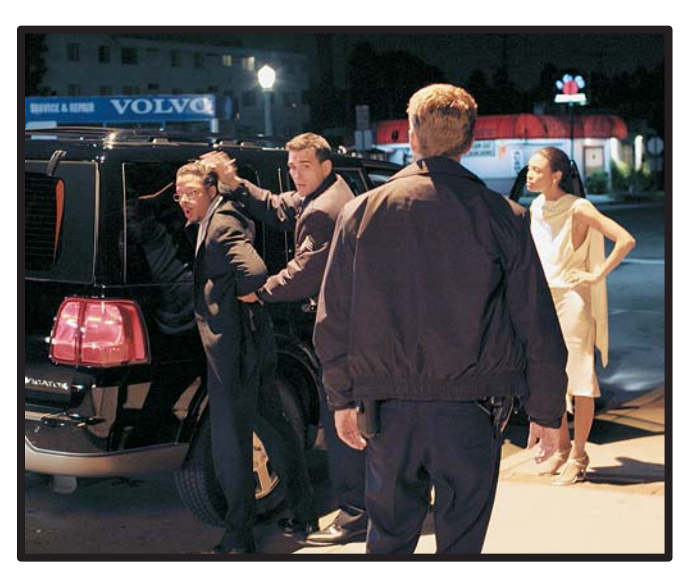
groups. **Racism**, an ideology or set of beliefs about the superiority of one racial or ethnic group over another, provides this support; it is used to justify social arrangements between the dominant and minority groups. Racist beliefs are often rooted in the assumption that differences between groups are innate, or biologically based. They can also arise from a negative view of a group's cultural characteristics. In both cases, racism presumes that one group is better than another.

Prejudice and discrimination are closely related to racism, and though the terms are often used interchangeably, there are important distinctions between them. **Prejudice**, literally a "prejudgment," is an inflexible attitude (usually negative, although it can work in the reverse) about a particular group of people and is rooted in generalizations or stereotypes. Examples of prejudice include opinions like "All Irish are drunks" or "All Mexicans are lazy." Prejudice often, though not always, leads to **discrimination**: an action or behavior that results in the unequal treatment of individuals because of their membership in a certain racial or ethnic group. A person might be said to suffer discrimination if she is turned down for a job promotion or a home loan because she's black or Hispanic.

It is possible, though unlikely, that a person can be prejudiced and still not discriminate against others. For example, a teacher can believe that Asian American students are better at math and science, yet deliberately not let this belief influence his grading of Asian American students. Conversely, a person may not be prejudiced at all but still unknowingly participate in discrimination. For instance, a small child can innocently use the racist terminology she learns from her parents even though she herself holds no racist views. And prejudice and discrimination don't always flow from the dominant group toward minorities. In the 2005 movie *Crash*, for instance, we see depictions of whites who are prejudiced against blacks and blacks who are prejudiced against whites; Middle Easterners and blacks who are both prejudiced against Hispanics; whites defending blacks and Middle Easterners defending Hispanics; blacks who are prejudiced against themselves and whites who are prejudiced against other whites.

Discrimination can also take different forms. **Individual discrimination** occurs when one person treats others unfairly because of their race or ethnicity. A racist teacher might discriminate against a Hispanic student by assigning him a lower grade than he deserves. **Institutional discrimination**, in contrast, usually more systematic and widespread, occurs when institutions (such as governments, schools, or banks) practice discriminatory policies that affect whole groups of individuals.

A rather startling example of institutional discrimination comes from Ira Katznelson (2005) in his book *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America*. We usually associate



Discrimination Takes Many Forms The film *Crash* weaves together stories about different families in Los Angeles who each confront different forms of racism.

affirmative action with the advances of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and with benefiting blacks and other minorities. Katznelson, however, examines one instance of government policies benefiting whites. In 1944, Congress passed the G.I. Bill of Rights, which provided funding for college or vocational education and home loans to returning World War II veterans. While this should have supported black and white veterans alike, in practice blacks were largely impeded from taking advantage of the new benefits, while whites more easily climbed into the rapidly expanding American middle class. Typically, loans were granted only to those buying homes in all-white neighborhoods. And blacks were effectively barred from buying homes in those neighborhoods, either through legal restrictions or from hostile actions on the part of loan officers, realtors, and homeowners who were prejudiced against having blacks live next door. To make matters worse, loans were even denied to blacks who wished to buy homes in black neighborhoods; these

racism a set of beliefs about the superiority of one racial or ethnic group; used to justify inequality and often rooted in the assumption that differences between groups are genetic

prejudice an idea about the characteristics of a group that is applied to all members of that group and is unlikely to change regardless of the evidence against it

discrimination unequal treatment of individuals based on their membership in a social group; usually motivated by prejudice

individual discrimination discrimination carried out by one person against another

institutional discrimination discrimination carried out systematically by institutions (political, economic, educational, and others) that affect all members of a group who come into contact with it

were seen as risky investments. Later affirmative action programs were actually modeled after those of the postwar era that ironically benefited whites and created an even greater economic disparity between racial groups.

Another example comes from Lawrence Otis Graham, a Princeton- and Harvard-trained African American lawyer who investigated firsthand institutionalized racism in the upper-crust world of the East Coast elite. He found that, for example, he was not able to join a particular Connecticut country club as a member; however, he was welcome to serve in the capacity of busboy to the club's all-white membership and wait staff (1996). This shocked Graham; he believed his Ivy League credentials would have opened any door but discovered that in a racially stratified society, a black man with privileged socioeconomic status is still a black man in the end.

Some students have difficulty in recognizing just how persistent and pervasive racism is in contemporary American society, while others experience it on a daily basis. We hear claims that it has been erased. But although there have been tremendous strides, especially in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, racism is not yet a thing of the past. There is still deep skepticism among minorities that negative racial attitudes are changing in America (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997; Bobo and Smith 1998). A survey conducted by Gallup in 2003 showed that 59 percent of whites believe that race relations in the United States are good and 24 percent believe they are bad, while 48 percent of blacks believe that race relations are good and 37 percent believe they are bad. Another striking result of the survey revealed that more than half of both whites and blacks believe that relations between the two will always be a problem in the United States.

Racism today may not be as blatant as it once was—blacks don't have to use separate bathrooms or drinking fountains—but it has taken other, more subtle forms (such as the high concentration of liquor stores in predominantly black urban areas). If we are to have a truly "color-blind" society, it will take much more education and change in the social conditions that perpetuate inequality.

Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Race in the United States

Sociologists reject the notion that race has an objective or scientific meaning and instead seek to understand why race continues to play such a critical role in society. They have produced a number of different theories about the connections between race, discrimination, and social inequality.

For example, functionalist theory has provided a useful lens for analyzing how certain ethnic groups, mainly European immigrants (like the Irish and Italians) arriving in the early 1900s, eventually became assimilated into the larger society. Functionalism, however, has proven less successful in explaining the persistence of racial divisions and why other races and ethnicities, such as African Americans and Hispanics, have continued to maintain their distinct identities alongside the white majority culture today.

Perhaps what functionalism can best offer is an explanation of how prejudice and discrimination develop, by focusing on social solidarity and group cohesion. Groups have a tendency toward ethnocentrism, or the belief that one's own culture and way of life are right and normal. Functionalists contend that positive feelings about one's group are strong ties that bind people together. At the same time, however, this cohesiveness can lead members to see others, especially those of other races or ethnicities, in an unfavorable light. According to functionalists, these cultural differences and the lack of integration into the larger society on the part of minorities tend to feed fear and hostility.

Conflict theory focuses on the struggle for power and control. Classic Marxist analyses of race, developed by sociologists in the 1960s, looked for the source of racism in capitalist hierarchies. Edna Bonacich, for instance, argues that racism is partly driven by economic competition and the struggle over scarce resources. A "split labor market," in which one group of workers (usually defined by race, ethnicity, or gender) is routinely paid less than other groups, keeps wages low for racial and ethnic minorities, compounding the effects of racism with those of poverty (1980). William Julius Wilson believes that openly racist government policies and individual racist attitudes are the driving forces in the creation of a black underclass but that it is perpetuated by economic factors, not racial ones (1980). But while this link between race and class is useful and important, it doesn't provide a satisfactory explanation for all forms of racial and ethnic stratification.

In recent years, conflict theorists have developed new approaches to understanding race. In his book *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (2008), for example, Tomas Almaguer looks at the history of race relations in California during the late nineteenth century. He describes a racial hierarchy that placed whites at the top, followed by Mexicans, blacks, Asians, and Native Americans at the bottom. Rather than focusing exclusively on class, he examines how white supremacist ideology became institutionalized. Racist beliefs became a part of political and economic life during that period. Ideas like "manifest destiny" (the belief that the United States had a mission to expand its territories) helped justify the taking of

TABLE 9.1 *Theory in Everyday Life*

Perspective	Approach to Race and Ethnicity	Case Study: Racial Inequality
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Racial and ethnic difference is a necessary part of society. Even racial inequality has functions that help maintain social order.	The functions of racial inequality and conflict for society could include the creation of social cohesion within both the dominant and minority groups.
CONFLICT THEORY	Racial and ethnic differences create intergroup conflict—minority and majority groups have different interests and may find themselves at odds as they attempt to secure and protect them.	Some members of majority groups (whites and men in particular) object to affirmative action programs that assist underrepresented groups. This can create conflict between racial groups in society.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Race and ethnicity are part of our presentation of self.	Some individuals—white ethnics and light-skinned nonwhites in particular—have the option to conceal their race or ethnicity in situations where it might be advantageous to do so. This may allow them as individuals to escape the effects of racial inequality but does not erase it from the society at large.

lands, and the notion that Native Americans were "uncivilized heathens" helped justify killing them. Sociologists like Michael Omi and Howard Winant also argue that race isn't just a secondary phenomenon that results from the class system: it permeates both lived experience and larger-scale activity such as the economy and the government (1989).

Still others have sought to understand the meaning of race from the individual's point of view and have begun to analyze the ways that race, class, and gender inequalities intersect. For instance, writers like Patricia Hill Collins (2006), bell hooks (1990), and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) argue that race must be explained in the terms in which it is experienced, not as overarching general theories. Though some of these writers have been sharply critical of the symbolic interactionist tradition, which they believe does not take into account macro social forces that shape the realities of stratification, they share with interactionism a conviction that race, like all other aspects of social life, is created symbolically in everyday interactions. It is this idea to which we now turn.

Race as an Interactional Accomplishment

Remember Erving Goffman's ideas about how we project our identities in interaction with others? This process is constant and ongoing—there is no "time out." We "read" others through a myriad of cues, and we in turn make ourselves readable to others by our own self-presentations. Our identity is constructed in the negotiation between what we project and what others recognize. Even master statuses like race, gender, and age are negotiated in this way. So how *do* we project our racial or ethnic identities and read the racial or ethnic identities of others? We might think immediately of stereotypes like hip-hoppers with baggy pants, skateboard dudes, sorority girls, "welfare moms," and so on. But in fact there are more subtle ways in which we project and receive our racial and ethnic identities.

Passing

Racial **passing**, or living as if one is a member of a different racial category, has a long history in the United States. Both during and after slavery, some light-skinned African Americans would attempt to live as whites in order to avoid the dire consequences of being black in a racist society. And people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds still pass, intentionally or unintentionally, every day in the contemporary United States. Passing involves manufacturing or maintaining a new identity that is more beneficial than one's real identity. W.E.B. DuBois's concept of "double-consciousness" (see Chapter 2) seems relevant to a discussion of passing—DuBois asks whether one can be black and at the same time claim one's rights as an American. Given the history of oppression and enslavement of African Americans, DuBois is not the only person to wonder if this is possible. There are many social forces that disenfranchise and exclude African Americans, and the phenomenon of passing suggests that, in some places and times, it has been more advantageous to play down the "African" part of "African American" if at all possible.

passing presenting yourself as a member of a different racial or ethnic group than the one you were born into



The Sweeter the Juice Shirlee Taylor Haizlip's grandfather, who abandoned his family to live as a white man, is an example of racial passing.

But whatever its perceived benefits, living as if one is a member of a different racial category takes its toll. Passing is stressful, hard work, and almost entirely interactional: light-skinned blacks can "do white" only if they are skillful at behaving and talking like a white person and keeping their past racial identity a secret from people in their white present.

Shirlee Taylor Haizlip, a Los Angeles journalist, chronicled the passing stories of one half of her family in her book *The Sweeter the Juice* (1994). Haizlip grew up the daughter of a prominent black Baptist minister, attended Wellesley College, and lived a life of privilege and comfort as a member of a small East Coast African American elite in the 1950s. She always knew that she had white relatives (75 percent of all African Americans do) and that these relatives had something to do with her mother's story of being abandoned as a child by her own father. Haizlip decided to use her journalistic skills to find out who these relatives were and how they had disappeared into the white world. She tracked down an aunt (her mother's sister) and learned that her grandfather, who was very light skinned, had apparently not been able to resist the desire to escape the constraints of blackness for the privileges of whiteness. So he fled with his lightest-skinned child (Haizlip's aunt), leaving his other, darker children behind—and lived the rest of his life as a white man, cut off from his black ancestry.

In this story of passing, situational context is important: merely by surrounding himself with white people, Haizlip's grandfather accomplished whiteness rather effectively. In a socially segregated world, whom you hang out with goes a long way toward defining who you are, whether you are passing or not. But there are other requirements as well. Haizlip's aunt, for example, made sure her face was always well powdered, married a white man, and had no children, lest genes give her secret away. Indeed, while some of the white relatives Haizlip contacted knew about the black-white schism in the family, others did not—some were so surprised when Haizlip revealed that they had a former slave as a common great-grandfather, they blurted out, "Do you mean a *black* slave?" Their pasts had been so successfully erased through passing that after only one generation they were completely unaware of their black heritage.

embodied identity those elements of identity that are generated through others' perceptions of our physical traits

Embodied and Disembodied Identities

When we interact with others online, we're usually not able to see what they look like. This has been touted as one of the democratizing traits of the internet—that aspects of **embodied identity** (the way we are perceived in the physical world), historically used as the basis for discrimination, are not available to those interacting online. But in online communities that are *based* on racial identity, race must still be "done" interactionally (in this case, textually), as sociologist Byron Burkhalter found in his study of an internet community based on African American culture (1999). To sound authentically African American online, for instance, you have to include what Burkhalter calls "racially relevant" content and language—for example, "sister" to refer to other African American women. Responses also help establish racial identity: it's not just what you say, but how others receive it.

In some discussions, the African American identity of participants is accepted, but in other cases, that status is contested, in what Burkhalter calls "identity challenges." Identity challenges are usually accusations that one is not "really" black or not black enough, or that one is a "Tom"[1] or a racist. These challenges are usually made when postings reveal opinions that don't fit into a certain set of socially approved boundaries (such as opinions about the use of "proper" English versus slang).

Burkhalter argues that race is not irrefutably identifiable even in face-to-face interactions (as evidenced by the familiar, if irritating, question "What are you?") and that we must establish it interactionally both on- and offline. Stereotypes come into play in both arenas but in different directions: in face-to-face interaction, seeing racial characteristics leads to stereotyping; online, applying stereotypical templates leads to assumptions about race. The internet is thus not a place where all the problematic distinctions disappear—they just manifest themselves in different ways.

[1] "Tom" is a derogatory reference to the main character (a black slave) in Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, whose servile devotion to his white masters earned him the reputation (some argue, undeserved) of being a traitor to his race.



Racial Identity: "More Than the Sum of Our Parts" President Barack Obama, left, listens to the inauguration ceremony at the U.S. Capitol on January 20, 2009. Behind Obama is his family, including wife Michelle, daughters Malia and Sasha, his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng and her husband Konrad Ng, and Obama's mother-in-law Marian Robinson.



DATA WORKSHOP

ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

The Politics and Poetics of Racial Identity

> I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton's Army during World War II and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners—an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents, and for as long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible.
>
> It's a story that hasn't made me the most conventional candidate. But it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts—that out of many, we are truly one.
>
> —from Barack Obama's speech to the nation, March 18, 2008, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Barack Obama, the 44th president of the United States, is the first black man to be elected to the office. Issues of race featured prominently in his 2008 campaign, and during a campaign stop in Philadelphia Obama gave one particularly famous speech on race that was discussed, analyzed, scrutinized, and evaluated by pundits and ordinary citizens alike for months afterward. In the speech, Obama ostensibly addressed some controversial comments about race delivered by the pastor of the church his family attended in Chicago. But he also spoke to bigger issues that everyone, regardless of race, has had to grapple with simply as part of being an American. Indeed, he presented the issue of racial prejudice as one of America's defining social problems and challenged all Americans to work toward solving it.

This Data Workshop asks you to do a content analysis of a speech, song, poem, or performance that deals with racial and ethnic identity. Check out text and video of Obama's speech at http://www.barackobama.com/2008/03/18/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_53.php. You can also look up other important political speeches at the Library of Congress's "American Memory" website, dedicated to providing the public with electronic access to "written and spoken words, sound recordings, still and moving images, prints, maps and sheet music that document the American experience": http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html.

You may also choose a poem from your favorite writer and consider how racial and ethnic identity are socially constructed in poetry. Or you might rent or record an episode of the HBO series *Def Poetry Jam*, which features artists such as Mos Def, Jay-Z, Caroline Kennedy, Rakim, Erykah Badu, Mutaburuka, and Jill Scott. Or analyze the lyrics from your favorite musical artist (in the case of rap or hip-hop artists, some are also Def Jam poets). Consider other kinds of sources as well, such as the stand-up routines of



In Relationships

"Jungle Fever": Interracial Romance, Dating, and Marriage

Forty-one out of the fifty American states prohibited **miscegenation**—romantic, sexual, or marital relationships between people of different races—at some point in their history. In 1958, for example, Mildred and Richard Loving, an African American woman and a white man, married and settled in their native state of Virginia. In July of that year, they were arrested for violating the state's "Act to Preserve Racial Purity" and convicted. The judge sentenced them to a year in prison but suspended the sentence on the condition that the couple leave the state. The Lovings moved to Washington, D.C., where in 1967 the Supreme Court overturned all such laws, ruling that the state of Virginia had denied the Lovings their constitutional rights. While the Loving decision technically cleared the way for interracial marriages nationwide, states were slow to change their laws; Alabama finally overturned its antimiscegenation statute in 2000.

Society at large does seem more accepting of interracial relationships now than it was in 1967. By 2002, almost 20 percent of 18- and 19-year-olds reported being in an interracial relationship (Kao and Joyner 2005). At the same time, though, about 27 percent of Americans still expressed disapproval. Despite all the steps we have taken toward racial equality and integration, American society is not ideally structured to promote interracial contact, let alone romance. Cultural stereotypes and media images, for example, provide serious obstacles to interracial relationships. Several researchers point out that minorities tend to be exoticized or stereotyped by the general population. Thus, Asian women are seen as subservient, mysterious, seductive, and/or sex objects; conversely, Asian men are portrayed as nonsexual geeks or martial arts pros (Le 2001). Black men are mythologized as having especially strong sex drives, and black



Mildred and Richard Loving

Korean American comic Margaret Cho, the Chicano comedy troupe Culture Clash, the Middle Eastern comics in "Axis of Evil," or the African American Queens of Comedy. Finally, you could also write an original speech or poem about your own experience of your racial or ethnic identity, then discuss it using the principles of content analysis. Whichever option you choose, remember to focus on how the text expresses ideas about race, ethnicity, identity, inequality, and solidarity.

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare written notes on your chosen text that you can refer to in class. Compare your notes and experiences with other students in small-group discussions.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay analyzing your chosen text.



How Do You Feel about Interracial Relationships? The 2006 film *Something New* (with Sanaa Lathan and Simon Baker) confronts some of the stereotypes about interracial relationships.

women are assumed to be unable to control their sexual urges (Foeman and Nance 1999); white women are thought to be accommodating in bed (Shipler 1997). These stereotypes, though they are not borne out in reality, still have the power to influence our attitudes and behavior.

Movies sometimes provide a warning. In both Spike Lee's 1991 movie *Jungle Fever* and the 2001 Julia Stiles movie *Save the Last Dance*, white women in interracial relationships are criticized by people in the African American community for taking available black men away from black women, a problem that is exacerbated by the higher levels of incarceration and murder among young black men. A young African American woman is quoted in an *Ebony* magazine article as saying, "Every time I turn around and I see a fine Brother dating outside his race, I just feel disgusted. I feel like, what's wrong with us? Why do you choose her over me?" (Hughes 2003).

People who date interracially must deal with in-group pressures to date—and especially marry—someone of their own race. This phenomenon is most commented on in the African American community (though by no means exclusive to it). In fact, although blacks are as likely to date interracially as members of any other group, they are less likely to outmarry than any other nonwhite group. Anita Allen, a professor of law and philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania, has observed that many African Americans view marrying a nonblack as being disloyal to the community (NPR 2003). Commentary on this subject can be found in scores of magazine articles and in movies and even comic strips (see Aaron McGruder's "Boondocks").

How do you feel about interracial relationships? This topic is not just a hot-button issue for you to discuss with friends and family; it provides an opportunity for you to apply your sociological perspective to understand an important area of debate in everyday social life.

Race, Ethnicity, and Life Chances

A law professor decides that it is time to buy a house. After careful research into neighborhoods and land values, she picks one. With her excellent credit history and job as law professor, she easily obtains a mortgage over the phone. When the mortgage forms arrive in the mail, she sees to her surprise that the phone representative has identified her race as "white." Smiling, she checks another box, "African American," and mails back the form. Suddenly, everything changes. The lending bank wants a bigger down payment and higher interest rates. When she threatens to sue, the bank backs down. She learns that the bank's motivation is falling property values in the proposed neighborhood. She doesn't understand this because those property values were completely stable when she was researching the area.

Then she realizes that *she* is the reason for the plummeting values.

As Patricia Williams's (1997) experience illustrates, membership in socially constructed categories of race and ethnicity can often carry a high price. We now look at other ways this price might be paid, in the areas of health, education, work, family, and criminal justice.

Family

Data from the Census Bureau (2008e) showed that of the white population over 18 years of age, 55.6 percent were married, 9.8 percent divorced, 6.0 percent widowed, and 26.7 percent never married. Of the African American population over 18, 33.8 percent were married, 10.7 percent divorced, 6.1 percent widowed, and 44.8 percent never married. The Hispanic population was more similar to the white population with 49.8 percent over 18 married, 7.3 percent divorced, 3.3 percent widowed, and 36.1 percent never married. Thus, African Americans are more likely than whites and Hispanics to never marry, to be divorced, or to be widowed.

Kathryn Edin (2000) argues that low-income women of all ethnicities see marriage as having few benefits. They feel that the men they are likely to encounter as possible husbands will not offer the advantages (financial stability, respectability, trust) that make the rewards of marriage worth the risks. This doesn't mean, of course, that most low-income women don't love their male companions; it only means that they believe a legal bond would not substantially improve their lot in life.

In 2006, the birth rates for American teenage mothers (ages 15 to 19) varied significantly by race. The birth rate for white teenage moms was 27 per 1,000 births, while the birth rate for African Americans was 64 per 1,000; for Hispanics it was 83 per 1,000 (National Center for Health Statistics 2007b). Social thinkers such as Angela Y. Davis argue that African American teenage girls in particular see fewer opportunities for education and work and choose motherhood instead (2001). Davis believes that social policies aimed at punishing teenage mothers of color will be ineffective; only by attacking the racism inherent in the educational system and the workforce will these teens be at less risk of becoming mothers.

Health

Health care is an area in which we find widespread disparity between racial and ethnic groups. Because there is no universal health care in the United States, consumers must rely on insurance benefits provided through their employer or buy individual policies in order to meet their medical needs. Many Americans, however, cannot afford basic

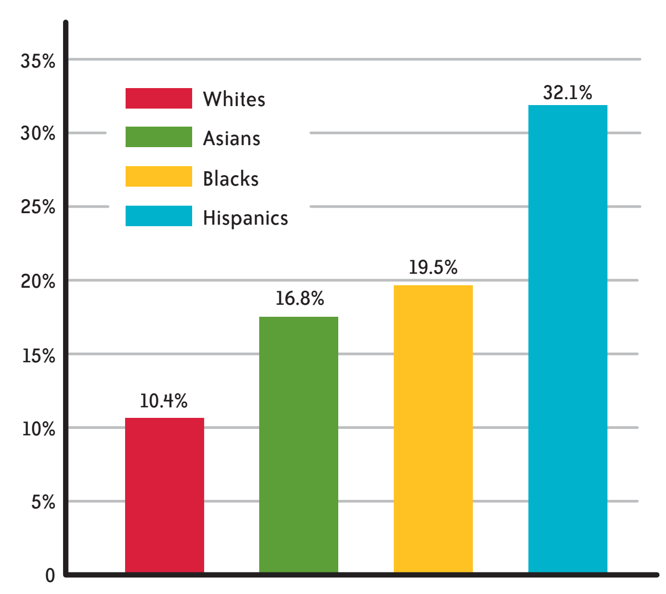


FIGURE 9.1 Americans without Health Insurance by Race, 2007
Disparities in access to health care adversely affect different groups.

SOURCE: U. S. Census Bureau 2008c

health-care coverage. In 2007, some 10.4 percent of whites were without health insurance, along with 16.8 percent of Asian Americans, 19.5 percent of blacks, and 32.1 percent of Hispanics (Figure 9.1).

Disparities in access to health care may help explain the life expectancy rates for men and women of different races. White male children born in 2004 can expect to live to be 75.7, while white females can expect to live to be 80.8. However, African American males' life expectancy is only 69.8 years, and African American females' is 76.5. Hispanic males' life expectancy, on the other hand, is 77.2 years, and Hispanic females' is 83.7. Minorities are also often exposed to other factors that impact lifespan, such as dangers in the workplace, toxins in the environment, or personal behaviors like drinking and poor diet (National Center for Health Statistics 2007a). While life expectancy statistics are only crude indicators of general health, they do reveal continuing race-based discrepancies, including the ongoing mystery of why Hispanics live longer, a question researchers are still trying to answer.

Education

One of America's cultural myths is that everyone has equal access to education, the key to a secure, well-paying job. However, by looking at those who actually receive degrees, we can see that the playing field is not that level. According to the Census Bureau (2008b), in 2006, 95 percent of white students earned a high school diploma, while 92 percent of African American students and 88 percent of Hispanic students did so. The reasons for dropping out are complex,

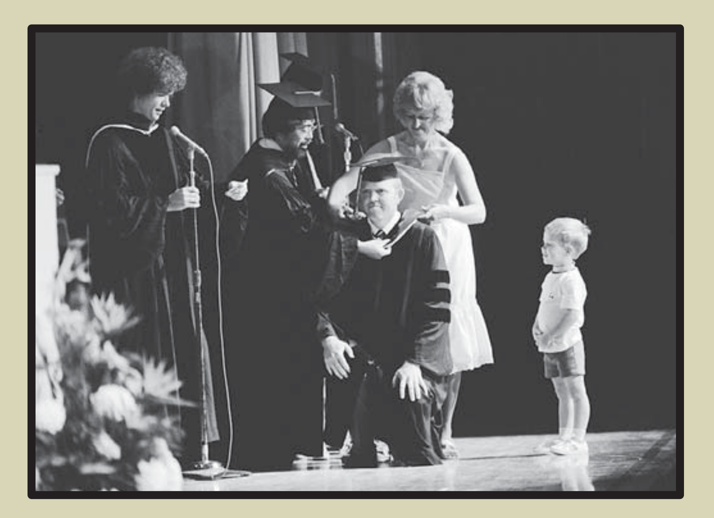
On the Job

Race in College Admissions

Affirmative action policies were first put in place in the 1960s to make sure that racial and ethnic minorities had equal access to opportunities that had historically been available only to whites. While in principle these policies were lauded as a way to create a "level playing field" for all Americans, problems began to surface in practice. In 1978, a white student named Alan Bakke sued the University of California for "reverse discrimination": Bakke claimed that his application to UC Davis's medical school had been rejected in favor of lesser-qualified minority applicants because the school had set aside 16 percent of its medical school slots for minority applicants. The case went to the Supreme Court, and while the Court upheld the idea of affirmative action in general, it outlawed the "quota system" that had contributed to Bakke's rejection.

Since then, colleges and universities, private employers, and governments at all levels have struggled with the principles of affirmative action. Influential state university systems in California, Washington, Texas, and Michigan have faced additional legal challenges to their admissions criteria and have attempted to craft race-blind policies that produce the same effects as affirmative action. While seeking to avoid "quotas" and "preferential treatment," these schools also wish to increase diversity and create opportunities for historically underrepresented groups. How can these goals be accomplished simultaneously? Not without difficulty, it seems. California's public university system saw a substantial decrease in the number of minority applicants immediately following the policy changes made in 1996 that prohibited using race, sex, or ethnicity as a basis for admission or financial aid (Weiss 2001). Although the admission rates in the University of California system for non-Asian minority students rose in fall 1999 (almost to the levels of 1997, the last year of race-based admissions), they have continued to decline in the years since.

College admissions staff grapple with questions about race every day when they arrive at work. Rachel Toor, a former admissions officer at Duke University, maintains that "Duke was firmly committed to Affirmative Action," but evidently there was much confusion over what its affirmative action policies actually were. In her position on the admissions committee, Toor says, "I tried to discuss larger social



Alan Bakke

and cultural issues relating to race . . . I rolled my eyes when [colleagues] made racist comments." But decisions taking race into account remained difficult and contentious. Toor herself supports affirmative action policies because, she says, "if left in the hands of admissions officers, the way Duke's rating system is set up, there would be very few students of color" (2001).

The problems facing Toor and her committee are not unique to Duke. Until 2003, the University of Michigan had affirmative action programs for both its undergraduate and law school students. The undergraduate admissions procedure was based on a rigid point system, which led white students who had been denied admission to complain that additional points given to minority students solely on the basis of race gave them an unfair advantage. The law school admissions procedure used race as one of several factors to be considered. In 2003, the Supreme Court upheld the law school policy and revised the undergraduate policy. Supporters at the University of Michigan argued that the Court had firmly endorsed the principle of diversity articulated by Justice Powell in the *Bakke* decision. Outgoing Dean Jeffrey Lehman said, "By upholding the University of Michigan Law School's admissions policy, the court has approved a model for how to enroll a student body that is both academically excellent and racially integrated." Further, "The question is no longer whether affirmative action is legal; it is how to hasten the day when affirmative action is no longer needed" (J. Peterson 2003).

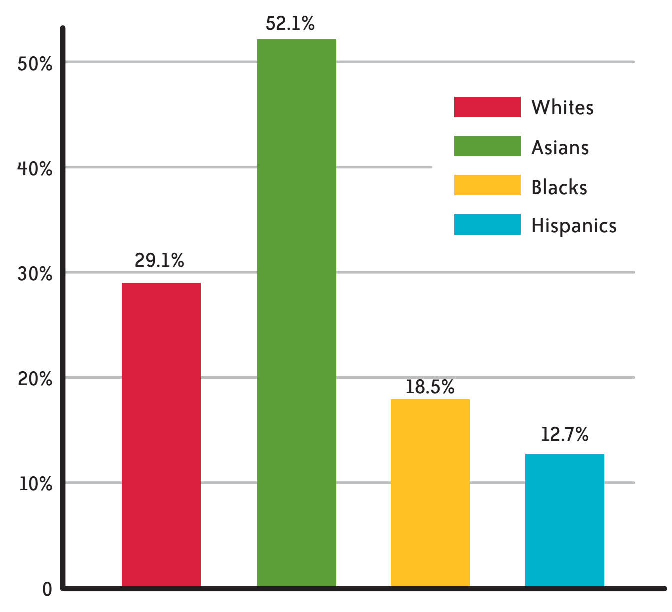


FIGURE 9.2 **U.S. Bachelor's Degree Holders by Race, 2007**

SOURCE: U. S. Census Bureau 2008b

but the highest rates are associated with those from economically disadvantaged and non–English-speaking backgrounds. Only Asian Americans at 98 percent show higher high school graduation rates than whites.

In higher education, the numbers are similar. In 2007, 52.1 percent of Asian Americans, 29.1 percent of whites, 18.5 percent of blacks, and 12.7 percent of Hispanics earned a bachelor's degree (Figure 9.2). Further, in 2005, 15.3 percent of Asian Americans, 8.8 percent of whites, 5.1 percent of African Americans, and 3.3 percent of Hispanics earned advanced degrees (master's, professional degrees, and doctorates). Thus, Asian Americans and whites enjoy more success overall in the U.S. educational system than African Americans and Hispanics. The reasons for the disparity are again complex, involving both economic and cultural factors. Earning an education is extremely important in American society. Not only does it translate to greater success in the workforce, it also confers social status and cultural capital that can prove valuable in other arenas.

Work and Income

African Americans make up 11.3 percent and Hispanics 10.9 percent of the total workforce. If jobs were truly given to people regardless of racial or ethnic identity, we would expect to see these same distributions across occupations. However, that is not the case. For example, in 2007, African Americans constituted 6.3 percent and Hispanics 7.4 percent of all executive and managerial professions (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008b). That means that these positions, usually requiring advanced degrees, are primarily held by whites.

In contrast, persons of color carry the burden of some of society's most difficult jobs. In 2007, 33.6 percent of all nurses and home health aids and 24.8 percent of all postal clerks were black, while Hispanics were more likely to be employed in farming (40.4 percent of total) and as private household cleaners (40.4 percent of total). Except for nursing, these jobs are more likely to be semiskilled or unskilled. Thus, people of color, who are less likely to achieve high levels of education, are more likely to swell the bottom rungs of the job market (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics 2008b). Interestingly enough, some lower-level jobs have shifted from African Americans to Hispanics over time. For instance, in 1983, African Americans accounted for 42.4 percent and Hispanics for 11.8 percent of all private household cleaners; by 2007, blacks accounted for only 17.6 percent. A similar shift may be seen with other low-wage jobs. This means that persons of color increasingly compete with each other for such jobs.

In 2005, the median income for whites was $48,977, for African Americans $30,134, and for Hispanics $34,241. Asian Americans had the highest median income at $57,518 (U.S. Census Bureau 2008g). The median incomes of Asian Americans and whites thus place them in the middle class, while those of blacks and Hispanics place them in the lower-middle (working) class. African Americans and Hispanics are more disproportionately represented than whites in the income brackets between $0 and $49,999, while whites are more disproportionately represented in income brackets above $50,000. In 2006, 10.3 percent of whites lived below the poverty line, compared with 24.3 percent of African Americans and 20.6 percent of Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau 2008g). These numbers make it easy to see how race and class intersect to influence life outcomes.

Criminal Justice

Although the majority of the U.S. population is white—about 69 percent, as opposed to about 13 percent black and 13 percent Hispanic—we don't find these same proportions in the prison population. Of all state and federal male prisoners in 2007, 39 percent were African American, while 36 percent were white and 20 percent Hispanic (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2008). Why are African American men and Hispanic men much more likely to go to prison than white men?

Some laws that don't seem race based still create racially differentiated outcomes. For example, until 2007 federal law handed out tougher sentences to crack users (who are more likely to be black) than to users of powdered cocaine (who are more likely to be white): if you possessed of a small amount of crack (for personal use), you'd get the same stringent sentence

TABLE 9.2 Federal Cocaine Offenders by Race/Ethnicity, 2000

	POWDER COCAINE		CRACK COCAINE	
Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	932	17.8	269	5.6
Black	1,596	30.5	4,069	84.7
Hispanic	2,662	50.8	434	9.0
Other	49	0.9	33	0.7
Total	5,239	100	4,805	100

SOURCE: U.S. Sentencing Commission 2000 Datafile

that you would if you possessed a huge amount of cocaine (enough for hundreds of uses). While this discrepancy was remedied in 2007, it left many convicted of crack possession awaiting official reductions in their sentences. Unemployment rates are higher among minority groups, as are dropout rates, and these may affect incarceration rates. There is also some evidence that there are connections to declining marriage rates and incarceration (Pettit and Western 2004).

It is also clear that African Americans are far more likely than whites to be murdered: In 2007, whites accounted for 46.8 percent of the murder victims nationwide, while African Americans accounted for 49.3 percent (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2008). Again, these percentages don't reflect the racial distribution of the U.S. population as a whole. Finally, over half of the reported hate crimes in 2006 were attributed to racial discrimination, with over two-thirds of those targeting blacks (U.S. Department of Justice 2007b).

Race Relations: Conflict or Cooperation

The relationships between racial and ethnic groups in a society can take different forms. In some instances, groups may be tolerant and respectful of one another, while in other cases there is unending hostility. In this section, we will examine five basic patterns of intergroup relationships, from the most violent to the most tolerant. Keep in mind that some ethnic groups, such as Native Americans, may suffer several different patterns of hardship over a period of time.

Genocide

The first pattern represents the worst possible outcome between a dominant and a subordinate group. Not only has **genocide**, the deliberate and systematic extermination of a racial, ethnic, national, or cultural group, taken place in the past, it continues today in certain parts of the globe. One of the most horrific and wide-scale examples was the Holocaust of World War II, when more than 6 million European Jews and several million more non-Jewish "undesirables" (including Gypsies, Poles, Slavs, political enemies, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholic clergy, homosexuals, and people with disabilities) were moved to concentration camps and executed by the German Nazis (Friedman 1995). Since then, genocide, or "ethnic cleansing," has destroyed more millions of lives in Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and Africa. It is also possible to consider the violence perpetuated by the early Americans against the Native American tribes who occupied North America as a form of genocide. While Native Americans died from diseases introduced by the settlers, they were also systematically killed by the European colonists. In the few hundred years that it took for the United States to be settled from coast to coast, the Native American population was almost completely decimated. Estimates for the total number killed range anywhere from 15 million up to 100 million (Stannard 1993; Cook 1998).

Population Transfer

The treatment of Native Americans leads us to the next pattern of group relations—**population transfer**, or the forcible removal of a group of people from the territory they have occupied. In the early nineteenth century, Native Americans who had not perished in battles with U.S. soldiers were forced by the U.S. government to move onto Indian reservations (also referred to as tribal lands or American Indian nations) west of the Mississippi River. They were often moved far away from the lands where they had lived for generations (mostly Southern states), as these were desirable territories that the whites wished to acquire for themselves. Between 1838 and 1839, in one of the most well-known examples, the state of Georgia and the federal government forcibly marched 17,000 Cherokees westward over 800 miles, a grueling journey known as the "Trail of Tears." Along the way, over 4,000 people died of hunger, exposure, or disease.

The separate territories established for the Native Americans are an example of a kind of partitioning that we can see happening today in Israel between the Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. There, the Israeli government restricts the movement of Palestinians and has even built miles of barriers designed to wall them in and keep them separate from the Israeli population. Sometimes population transfer takes a more indirect

genocide the deliberate and systematic extermination of a racial, ethnic, national, or cultural group

population transfer the forcible removal of a group of people from the territory they have occupied



Stories of Genocide

The twentieth century witnessed numerous incidents of genocide. From 1915 to 1923, during and after World War I, the Turkish government massacred 1.5 million Armenians in what is often referred to as the "forgotten genocide." Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler's rule killed two-thirds of the Jews of Europe. Few paid attention to the Armenian tragedy, and many refused to believe the initial reports of Hitler's death camps as well (Hitler himself recognized this, and is alleged to have asked, "Who remembers the Armenians?" when he embarked on his own genocidal project). In the latter half of the century, such events became all too common. From the atrocities of Darfur to Slobodan Miloševič's ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and the Hutu slaughter of Tutsis in Rwanda, genocide has become a familiar feature of the modern landscape.

Faced with such overwhelming horror, it would be easy to give up and assume that there's nothing one person can do to stop it. However, this has not been the attitude of those who lived through these events, some of whom have begun recording their life histories. The documentarians who collect these stories hope to change the world in two different ways. First, they hope the histories will serve as a permanent reminder so that future generations might avert such tragedies. Second, they hope to provide some relief to the survivors, who are often traumatized and guilt ridden.

Around the world, for example, wherever Holocaust survivors have settled, archives have sprung up to record their testimony. The most ambitious of these programs may also be the most recent. In 1994, after filming *Schindler's List*, director Steven Spielberg founded the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation to document the experiences of Holocaust survivors. Spielberg believed the foundation's mission was particularly pressing because of the advanced age of most of the survivors. To capture their experiences, the foundation videotaped more than 51,000 testimonies in 32 languages by people living in 57 countries. These interviews are available to anyone, not just researchers, and are especially valuable to the communities where they were recorded.

Another project comes from Donald and Lorna Miller, who present a written record of the Armenian tragedy in their book *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (1999). After interviewing 100 survivors, the authors chronicled their experiences of brutality, despair, strength, and hope for future generations. And the photography exhibit "I Witness," which toured the United States in 2002, features portraits of aging Armenian survivors taken by photographers and activists Ara Oshagan and Levon Parian.

Telling these stories is immensely painful but also very important to survivors. This is why, even 50 years later, so many come forward to be interviewed. As Miriam Fridman, president of the Holocaust Survivors of South Florida, put it: "Telling our story rips us apart . . . but they will see us, know that we existed and what happened. Then we leave a legacy that history should not repeat" (quoted in Adams 1994). The Armenian ethnographer Verjine Svazlian offered her collection of life histories "as an evidence of the past and a warning for the future" (Svazlian 2000).

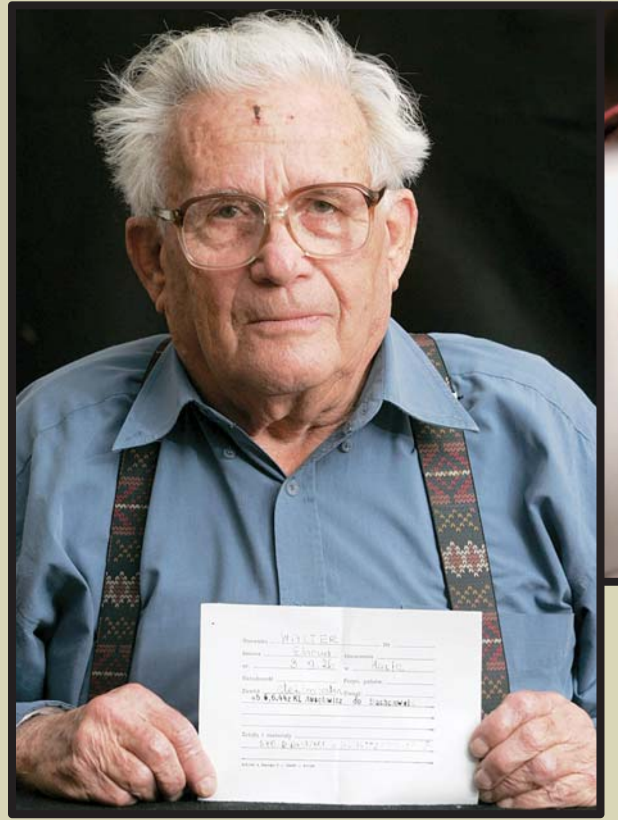
This sort of large-scale enterprise is not necessarily available for victims of more recent crises. Atrocities in the Balkans, Sudan, Rwanda, and elsewhere have created a large new refugee population that does not yet have the

form. For instance, it is possible to make life so miserable in a region that a group of people will choose to leave "voluntarily." This was the case with early Mormons, whose religious persecution in the East and Midwest between 1846 and 1869 drove 70,000 to cross the country (taking what is called the Mormon Pioneer Trail) and settle in the Great Salt Lake Valley region of Utah.

internal colonialism the economic and political domination and subjugation of the minority group by the controlling group within a nation

Internal Colonialism and Segregation

The term *colonialism* refers to a policy whereby a stronger nation takes control of a weaker foreign nation (the "colony") in order to extend its territory or to exploit the colony's resources for its own enrichment. The "British Empire," which once included such distant countries as India, Burma (now Myanmar), the West Indies, South Africa, and Australia, as well as America before its independence, is an example of colonialism. **Internal colonialism** describes





Survivors of Genocide Holocaust survivor Ehud Valter, 79, displays the card documenting his transfer between the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. Anna Karakian, 101, survived the mass killings of Armenians in 1915 in what was then the Ottoman Empire.

organization or the resources to create something like the Shoah Foundation (though see the creative nonfiction book *What Is the What* [Eggers 2006]). They do, however, have a desperate need to document their experiences.

Does the telling of stories of genocide actually help to prevent such events? Earlier life histories don't seem to have prevented racism and intolerance: after all, ethnic violence and genocide seem to be alive and well in the world today. However, we might argue that changing the world for the better is a process to engage in, not a goal that can be reached. In each generation atrocities will be committed, and each generation must reach out to the survivors and look for the seeds of social change. Telling and preserving stories can change the world—even if only one person at a time.

the exploitation of a minority group within the dominant group's own borders.

Internal colonialism often takes the form of economic exploitation and includes some sort of physical **segregation** of groups by race or ethnicity. For example, in the U.S. South up to the 1960s, not only did blacks live in separate neighborhoods, they were restricted to "coloreds"-only sections of buses, parks, restaurants, and even drinking fountains. If members of the minority group live close by yet in their own part of town (for instance, on the "other side of the tracks"), they are separate, and hence unequal, but still near enough to serve as workers for the dominant group.

Assimilation

With **assimilation**, a minority group is absorbed into the dominant group: this process

segregation the formal and legal separation of groups by race or ethnicity

assimilation a pattern of relations between ethnic or racial groups in which the minority group is absorbed into the mainstream or dominant group, making society more homogenous

racial assimilation the process by which racial minority groups are absorbed into the dominant group through intermarriage

cultural assimilation the process by which racial or ethnic groups are absorbed into the dominant group by adopting the dominant group's culture

pluralism a cultural pattern of intergroup relations that encourages racial and ethnic variation within a society

is the central idea behind America's "melting pot." On the surface, assimilation seems like a reasonable solution to the potential conflicts between different groups. If everyone belongs to the same group, if the society is largely homogenous, then conflict will decrease.

During much of the twentieth century, immigrants to the United States were eager to adopt an American way of life, become citizens, learn English, and lose any trace of their "foreign-ness." The Irish, Italians, and Eastern Europeans were all once considered "ethnics" but eventually assimilated into the larger category of white Americans. Today they are practically unrecognizable as distinct ethnic groups, unless they choose to emphasize characteristics that would so distinguish them. It is likely that this process will continue with the newer wave of immigrants; for instance, some census-type forms no longer distinguish Hispanic or Middle Eastern as separate categories from white.

But although there is something to be gained by assimilation, namely, membership in the dominant population, there is also something to be sacrificed. Minority group members may lose their previous ethnic or racial identity, either through **racial assimilation** (having children with the dominant group until the different races are completely mixed) or through **cultural assimilation**, in which members learn the cultural practices of the dominant group. In some cases, both types of assimilation take place at the same time.

In addition, the process of assimilation is not always entered into voluntarily. Sometimes a minority group may be forced to acquire new behaviors and forbidden to practice their own religion or speak their own language, until these are all but forgotten. For some, assimilation results in the tragic loss of a distinctive racial or ethnic identity. This is true for many Native Americans, for instance, who in just a few generations have lost the ability to speak their tribal languages or have forgotten cultural practices of their not-so-distant ancestors.

Pluralism

Pluralism not only permits racial and ethnic variation within one society, it actually encourages people to embrace diversity—to exchange the traditional melting pot image for a "salad bowl." In the last few decades, the United States has seen more and more groups celebrating their racial or ethnic roots, developing a strong common consciousness, and expressing pride in their unique identity.

At the core of multiculturalism is tolerance of racial and ethnic differences. A country like Switzerland provides an interesting example. Although the Swiss are largely homogenous in terms of race, the country is made up of several major ethnic and linguistic groups, including Protestants and Catholics as well as speakers of French, German, and Italian, who live in relative harmony and equality. There is little of the prejudice and discrimination that characterize other, diverse European countries. But the Swiss were not always so tolerant of diversity; their history is rife with ethnic conflict and the threat of civil war. It was not until 1848 that a new constitution established a legal system designed to share power among different groups, making sure that each had proportional representation at all levels of government. There is also no one "official" language; rather, all three are considered the national languages. Although some have called Switzerland an exception when it comes to multiculturalism, others claim that its success is due precisely to a political system that legislates democratic pluralism and depends on minorities being continually accommodated so that none become disenfranchised (Schmid 1981).

Another example of successful multiculturalism is Canada. This country's population is even more diverse than Switzerland's, composed of not only two official linguistic groups (English and French) but also ethnic and racial minorities that include European, Chinese, and Indian immigrants as well as members of "First Nations," or Canadian native peoples. The Canadian government is committed to the ideals of multiculturalism, with a great deal of funding directed to programs aimed at improving race relations and encouraging multicultural harmony. As a sign of that commitment, the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act declares that the role of government is to bring about "equal access for all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural, and political realms" (K. Mitchell 1993).

The United States is still moving toward becoming a more multicultural and egalitarian society, although in recent years there has been a backlash against the idea of pluralism. Some critics blame the educational system for allowing what they consider marginal academic areas, such as ethnic studies, women's studies, gay and lesbian studies, and the like, to be featured alongside the classic curriculum. Others question the need for bilingual education and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, despite research showing benefits to nonnative speakers (Krashen 1996). And groups such as U.S. English and English First advocate for legislation making English the national language and setting

limits on the use of other languages. Nevertheless, since the future seems sure to bring an ever greater racial and ethnic mix to the country, Americans may yet be able to incorporate multiculturalism into our sense of national identity.

Closing Comments

Constructing categories of race and ethnicity seems inevitably to lead to stratification and inequality and such destructive social processes as stereotyping, segregation, prejudice, and discrimination. Are there any positive consequences, either for society or for individuals? As it turns out, there are.

Racial and ethnic categories help create a sense of identity for members of these groups, which can lead to feelings of unity and solidarity—a sense of belonging to something that is larger than oneself, of cultural connection, and of shared history. We see this in action during ethnic festivals and holidays. When we share our own group unity with others in this way, we contribute to the diversity of our community and society. The more we understand and appreciate the diverse population of our nation, the less likely we may be to contribute to the destructive consequences of racial and ethnic categorization.

The important sociological insight here is that since categories of race and ethnicity are socially constructed, their meanings are socially constructed as well. Historically, we have constructed meanings that favor some and exploit and oppress others. Is it possible to construct meanings for racial and ethnic categories that value and celebrate them all? Over time, and with your newly acquired sociological insights, we hope you will be part of that transformation.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **Defining Race and Ethnicity** Social scientists see race and ethnicity as social constructions: they are not rooted in biological differences, they change over time, and they never have firm boundaries. In America, almost everyone has ancestors from multiple racial groups, regardless of which race or ethnicity they identify with. Similarly, sociologists have found that the boundaries of "whiteness" in America have changed over the years, especially with regard to non-Protestant European immigrants.
- Both race and ethnicity are social categories, but they are not interchangeable. Race is based on real or perceived physical differences, while ethnicity is based on cultural differences, like language, religion, or history. The distinction is important, because ethnicity can be displayed or hidden, depending on individual preference, whereas racial identities are always on display and never optional. Symbolic and situational ethnicity both refer to the display of ethnicity on special occasions or when it is beneficial.
- **What Is a Minority?** Race and ethnicity are often the basis for social stratification and unequal distribution of resources. Those racial and ethnic groups that are denied access to power and resources are called minority groups, even though they may outnumber the dominant group. Membership in a minority group is often a master status that matters in almost every aspect of life.
- **Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination** Social inequality based on race and ethnicity persists because of racism, which leads to discrimination and prejudice. Prejudice involves using a belief about a whole group to prejudge individual group members. Prejudice often leads to discrimination, actions or behaviors that deny someone opportunities or resources because of her racial or ethnic identity. Although many white Americans believe that racism is no longer a serious problem, most racial and ethnic minorities still see discrimination as commonplace.
- **Theoretical Approaches to Race in America** Sociologists have offered several theories to explain the critical role of race in our society. Functionalist theorists focus on the ways that race creates social ties and strengthens group bonds, though they also recognize that racial issues can lead to social conflict. Conflict theorists emphasize the ways that race is related to class and the economy. Early conflict theories, often focused on the American South, tried to explain race as the result of economic oppression; newer conflict theories aim to explain race in a more diverse society. Symbolic interactionists have focused on the ways that race, class,

and gender intersect to produce individuals' identities. This chapter is rooted in the symbolic interactionist tradition, which sees race not as some essence that individuals possess but as an aspect of identity established through interaction.

- **Race, Ethnicity, and Life Chances** Race and ethnicity influence every part of our lives, including health, education, work, family, and interactions with the criminal justice system. In all of these areas people of color suffer wide-ranging effects as a result of racism and discrimination. Nonwhites tend to have less access than whites to education, well-paying jobs, and health care, and they tend to interact with law enforcement more often. Because we live in a racially stratified society, whites tend to take for granted privileges denied to others.
- **Race Relations** Interactions between dominant and subordinate groups can take the form of genocide, population transfer, internal colonialism, segregation, assimilation, and pluralism. The first four of these patterns are manifestations of hostility and antagonism on the part of the dominant group. Many people believe that assimilation is a positive change, but others worry that it erases distinctive and valuable elements of racial and ethnic identities. For this reason, multiculturalism has become more popular within the United States in recent years, as it emphasizes the value of preserving many different identities.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. How do you identify yourself in terms of race or ethnicity? Are there special occasions or situations in which you are more likely to display your ethnicity or race? Do you identify with more than one racial or ethnic group or know anyone who does? What does this tell you about the origin of these categories?
2. Do you ever find yourself buying into prejudices? Can you think of examples of prejudices based on positive attitudes? What do you think is the long-term effect of such "positive" prejudices?
3. Many sociologists believe that institutional discrimination causes more harm than individual discrimination in the long run. Can you think of a social, political, or economic institution whose policies systematically benefit one racial group more than another?
4. This chapter argued that racial and ethnic identities are accomplished in interaction. Do you notice anything about the way you talk, the type of clothes you wear, your body movements, or facial expressions that project your racial identity? Have you ever changed something about yourself because you weren't comfortable with the identity it projected?
5. Robert Park, a functionalist theorist, believed that communication and exchange between racial and ethnic groups would inevitably lead to integration and the elimination of racial diversity, though it has become apparent that this theory is more applicable to some groups than to others. For whom is this kind of integration effective, and why?
6. Affirmative action in college admissions is one of the most controversial topics in America today. Why would a college want to consider race or ethnicity when making admissions decisions? What factors do you think admissions boards should consider?
7. Two metaphors are often used to describe the future of racial and ethnic relations in the United States: the "melting pot" and the "salad bowl." What are the differences between these two phrases, and which one do you think best describes the United States? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each model?
8. Although the Supreme Court ruled against antimiscegenation laws in 1967, homogamy, or assortive mating, is reinforced by social conventions. Would you date someone of a different race? Does your answer change depending on which racial or ethnic group you're thinking about?
9. This chapter described six different types of intergroup relations, ranging from genocide to multiculturalism. Choose three of these patterns and provide real-world examples not mentioned in the chapter. Do you think modern societies are trending one way or another?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Ararat. 2002. Dir. Atom Egoyan. Miramax Films. Examines the Armenian genocide that took place in Turkey in 1915 as well as the contemporary cultural memory of the event and its lasting impact on the Turkish and Armenian peoples.

Bamboozled. 2000. Dir. Spike Lee. New Line Cinema. In this dark, biting satire of the television industry, a new minstrel show, complete with actors in blackface, becomes a surprise hit. Lee makes parallels between minstrel and contemporary hip-hop, pointing out the ways that blacks are involved in perpetuating racism.

Crash. 2005. Dir. Paul Haggis. Lion's Gate Films. This movie follows the interlocking lives of two dozen Los Angeles residents over the course of two days. In this socially and racially diverse group, people collide with one another in shocking and sometimes unsettling ways.

Darfur Is Dying (www.darfurisdying.com). This free, web-based video game about the atrocities in the Darfur region of Sudan aims to inspire social activism by connecting players to the lives of those suffering in the genocide. In the game, the player's character must try to provide for the needs of his or her fellow refugees without being captured by militiamen.

Gourevitch, Philip. 1998. *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*. New York: Picador. Details the modern genocide between the Tutsi and Hutu people in Rwanda. Although the book is an excellent illustration of the way that racial categories are socially constructed, Gourevitch writes for many of the same reasons that museums record the testimony of Holocaust survivors. As he puts it, "the best reason I have come up with for looking more closely into Rwanda's horror stories is that ignoring them makes me more uncomfortable about existence and my place in it."

Kingston, Maxine Hong. 1989. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*. New York: Vintage. A memoir of growing up Chinese American in California, the child of immigrant parents. Like many social theorists, Kingston focuses on race as it is experienced by the individual and the ways that the meaning of race changes depending on one's social position.

Massey, Douglas, and Nancy Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. A sociological analysis of the way that segregation continues in America and its important consequences for race relations.

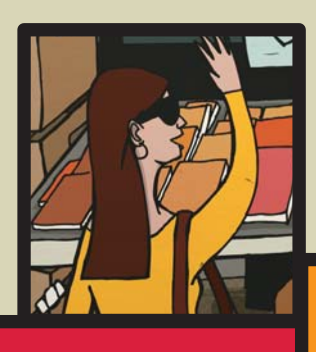
Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. 1984. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press. A collection of writings that approach race, class, gender, and sexuality from many different angles, always emphasizing the meaning of race as individuals experience it and the relationships between these categories.

Oliver, Melvin, and Thomas Shapiro. 1997. *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. London: Routledge. A contemporary, class-based account of racial inequality; the authors argue that differences in wealth, not income, hold the key to understanding racial inequality.

Project Implicit (implicit.harvard.edu). An intriguing research project at Harvard University that is finding new ways to measure racial attitudes, assuming that any traditional survey of attitudes about race and ethnicity will be hampered because on these issues, "people don't always 'speak their minds,' and it is suspected that people don't always 'know their minds.'"

Rose, Tricia. 1994. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. The fourth chapter, "Prophets of Rage: Rap Music and the Politics of Black Cultural Expression," offers a detailed analysis of the way that songs like "Illegal Search" by LL Cool J and "Who Protects Us from You" by KRS-ONE protest police harassment and brutality toward young black men.

Senna, Danzy. *Caucasia*. New York: Riverhead Trade. A moving novel about one young girl's experience of "passing." Birdie, the narrator, is the child of a racially mixed couple in Boston in the 1970s. When her parents split up, she stays with her mother and passes as white. The novel takes an unflinching look at the cost of being the child of a mixed-race couple in a racially intolerant society and the equally demanding pressures of passing as white.



CHAPTER 10

Constructing Gender and Sexuality

As far as their neighbors were concerned, there didn't seem to be anything particularly unusual about Thomas Beatie and his wife Nancy Roberts, a happily married couple in Bend, Oregon, with their own successful printing company. There's also nothing especially newsworthy about a healthy pregnancy, five months along, with no complications, and two happy parents-to-be. But in the case of Thomas and Nancy, reporters from all over the world were suddenly focused on their growing family. Why the interest? Because it was Thomas who was pregnant, not Nancy.

In March of 2008, *The Advocate* (a magazine devoted to a largely gay and lesbian readership) published an autobiographical piece, "Labor of Love," by Thomas Beatie, describing his decision to become pregnant. For most people the phrase "pregnant man" is an oxymoron, something that can't exist in reality. In fact, several neighbors told reporters they thought the whole thing was a hoax. Even the picture that ran in *The Advocate*, showing a clearly masculine Thomas naked from the waist up with a neatly trimmed beard and a pregnant belly, failed to convince everyone. But even the most skeptical had to admit he was really pregnant after an appearance on *Oprah*, when he let her camera crew tag along to the doctor's office for his ultrasound.

Beatie has been described as the world's first pregnant man, which isn't exactly true, but he certainly is the first one most Americans have heard of. He was born a girl, named Tracy Lagondino, but in his early 20s he decided to transition from female to male. He had a double-mastectomy and took testosterone, which helps to increase muscle mass, lower the register of the voice, and grow facial hair. Thomas, like many **transsexual** men, or "transmen," had not had his ovaries or uterus removed when he transitioned. His wife, Nancy, had a difficult pregnancy earlier in life that had left her unable to bear any children. So when they decided to start a family, Thomas stopped taking his hormones so he could carry the child. The couple used an anonymous sperm donor and did the insemination themselves at home, and Thomas conceived without the need for any fertility drugs or other treatment. On June 29, 2008, after 40 hours in labor, Thomas gave birth to a 9 pound, 5 ounce baby girl named Susan. When she arrived, her mother, Nancy, breastfed her.

Thomas and Nancy had encountered a lot of opposition to starting their family. They were rejected by nine different doctors when they first tried to get pregnant,

SocIndex

Then and Now

1960: Most American hospitals ban fathers from the delivery room

2008: Some 93–98% of expectant fathers plan to attend their child's birth

Here and There

Afghanistan: Maternal mortality rates equal 1,900 per 100,000 live births

United States: Maternal mortality rates equal 17 per 100,000 live births

This and That

Most common cause of death for women in the United States: heart disease

Most common cause of death for pregnant women in the United States: homicide

and even health care professionals refused to use the male pronoun when referring to Thomas. Legally, Oregon allows an individual to petition the court for a legal change of sex if that individual has undergone a surgical procedure to transition, which Thomas had done (the only way he was able to get a marriage license with Nancy). However, his insurance company was unwilling to cover prenatal care for a man, so the pregnancy was quite costly to them. Friction came from within the transgender community too, where some were uncomfortable with the amount of media attention that the couple seemed to be seeking, while others felt it was a healthy way for them to embrace the journey they had taken.

All through his pregnancy, Thomas insisted that he still identified as male, that he felt in some ways like his "own surrogate," and that "despite the fact that my belly is growing with a new life inside me, I am stable and confident being the man that I am." Noted gender theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick told the *New York Times* that "the Beatie case seems like a way of having some of the Trans 101 discussions publicly" and that the experience demonstrates that "genital surgery is not what defines gender" for many in the transgender community. This raises important sociological questions about sex and gender that have often gone unexplored in the past. What is the relationship of sex or gender to biology? Is it based on DNA, hormones, genitals? How do we decide if someone is a man or a woman? Can it ever change? And if so, can it change back? Thomas and Nancy are making a powerful assertion that biology is not destiny. As he wrote in *The Advocate*, "To Nancy, I am her husband carrying our child. . . . I will be my daughter's father, and Nancy will be her mother. We will be a family."

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

We often think of gender and sexuality as part of our biological inheritance, unchanging and unchangeable. We hope that after reading this chapter you will understand the ways in which our gender identity and sexual orientation are about *what we do* in addition to being about *who we are*. Gender and sexuality may be based in physiology, but their meanings are constructed in social contexts. As you read, pay attention to the processes involved in how the meaning of gender is constructed, as well as to the real consequences of gender inequality. As you become aware of these problems, perhaps you'll begin to think about solutions as well.

transsexuals individuals who identify with the opposite sex and have surgery to alter their own sex so it fits their self-image

sex an individual's membership in one of two biologically distinct categories—male or female

intersexed or **hermaphroditic** terms to describe a person whose chromosomes or sex characteristics are neither exclusively male nor exclusively female

What Is Sex? What Is Gender?

Although people often use the terms *sex* and *gender* interchangeably, sociologists differentiate between the two: most view "sex" as biological but "gender" as social or cultural. Even though a person is usually the same sex and gender, this is not always the case, as we will see.

Sex

Sex refers to an individual's membership in one of two categories—male or female. The distinctions between male and female are based on such biological factors as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs, all of which make up the primary sex characteristics. Males and females also possess different secondary sex characteristics, such as facial and body hair and musculature.

Most people assume that everyone is either male or female. However, about 17 babies in 1,000 are born **intersexed**, or **hermaphroditic**, having an abnormal

TABLE 10.1 Human Sex Characteristics

	FEMALES	MALES
Chromosomes	XX	XY
Dominant Hormones	Estrogen	Testosterone
Primary Sex Characteristics	Reproductive organs: vagina, cervix, uterus, ovaries, fallopian tubes, other glands	Reproductive organs: penis, testicles, scrotum, prostate, other glands
Secondary Sex Characteristics	Shorter than males; larger breasts; wider hips than shoulders; less facial hair; more subcutaneous fat; fat deposits around buttocks, thighs, and hips; smoother skin texture.	Abdominal, chest, body and facial hair; larger hands and feet; broader shoulders and chest; heavier skull and bone structure; greater muscle mass and strength; Adam's apple and deeper voice; fat deposits around abdominals and waist; coarser skin texture.

chromosomal makeup and mixed or indeterminate male and female sex characteristics (Fausto-Sterling 2000). For these infants, since nature hasn't clearly indicated their sex, parents and doctors choose one and take the appropriate medical steps (in most cases, female is the most viable and expedient choice). In modern Western society, the prospect of an ambiguously sexed person seems so threatening and unacceptable that surgical and other procedures are quickly sought to remedy the situation.

Gender

Gender refers to the physical, behavioral, and personality traits that a group considers to be normal, natural, right, and good for its male and female members. In other words, gender reflects our notions about what is appropriately "masculine" or "feminine." Some societies, for example, expect men to be more aggressive and competitive and women to be more emotional and nurturing. We often think of such characteristics as biologically determined or "natural," but no society leaves it completely up to nature to dictate the behavior of its male and female members. Gender, then, is something that is culturally transmitted or learned.

Nature and Nurture

Despite the social scientific evidence to the contrary, some people argue that gender differences between men and women are innate. To some extent, it is true that men and women really are built differently. We have different brain structures and different types of chemicals running through our bodies, which lead to somewhat different experiences and perceptions. But biology alone can't tell us everything about how sex and gender work. **Human sexual dimorphism**, the belief that anatomy defines men and women, is now highly contested owing to the media's attention to transvestites, transsexuals, and the transgendered, who broaden our definitions of sex and gender (Eller 2003). Biology may be neither the sole nor the primary factor in determining masculinity and femininity.

Here, it bears revisiting the "nature vs. nurture" debate we considered in Chapter 5. Too often, scientists fail to consider the interrelationship between these two forces. While nature may play some role in determining male or female traits, we must also consider the role of nurture—the social, cultural, and environmental context. In fact, Lepowsky (1993) suggests that in some cases, biological differences may be the result of culturally prescribed masculine and feminine behavior rather than the cause of it. For example, for both men and women, engaging in aggressive behavior increases the production of testosterone, a male hormone; it is thus possible that behavior influences biology, just as biology influences behavior (Sapolsky 1997).

gender the physical, behavioral, and personality traits that a group considers normal for its male and female members

human sexual dimorphism the extent, much debated in recent years, to which inherent physical differences define the distinctions between the two sexes

essentialists those who believe gender roles have a genetic or biological origin and therefore cannot be changed

gender identity the roles and traits that a social group assigns to a particular gender

Essentialist and Constructionist Approaches to Gender Identity

Depending on their field of study, sociologists look at gender from different perspectives. **Essentialists** see gender as immutable and biological, and **gender identity**—the

Global Perspective

Different Societies, Different Genders

In modern Western societies, we don't have a voice in what our gender will be. Someone looks us over at birth and declares, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" Even though some infants are born with indeterminate genitals, they are always assigned to one gender or the other as soon as possible, even if surgery is required. We have no words for someone who identifies as neither male nor female, nor do we find such an identity acceptable. Even those who undergo sex-reassignment surgery do so in order to move from one category to the other—very few individuals remain in gender limbo. But consider two societies that acknowledge a "third gender."

Berdaches

When nineteenth-century explorers and missionaries wrote about the native tribes they encountered in America, they also described individuals within those tribes who were neither male nor female, but somehow both. These people—called berdaches by nonnatives and "two-spirit" by natives—were usually biological males who dressed as women and took on types of work we think of as feminine, such as cooking and domestic labor. They could also be biological females who took on traditionally male pursuits, such as hunting, trapping, and warfare. Male berdaches have been documented in nearly 150 Native American cultures, and female berdaches in almost half that number. Some researchers believe that people who became berdaches were assigned to such a role from a very young age, if not from birth, for reasons of "demographic necessity" (Trexler 2002). In the northern reaches of Canada, for example, couples who had given birth to all girls may have decided that their next child would be raised as a boy (and therefore a hunter who could provide food for the family)—no matter what. In more southern regions, a family who needed a female child may have deliberately raised a boy as a girl; male berdaches were valued for their height and strength.

Research on berdaches seems contradictory. Some believe that, based on the records of the early Europeans, they were looked down on by their own tribes. Others point out that some berdaches were respected and played important roles in the religious life of their communities. What we do know is that berdaches were acknowledged as a third gender. Indian creation myths include such references as "When the spirit people made men and women, they also made berdaches" (Roscoe 2000, p. 4)—allowing these people a recognized place in the order of things.

Hijras

The hijras of India are a modern example of third-gender individuals. Like the berdaches, the hijras are recognized by their society as an acceptable variation on gender—neither male nor female, but something else entirely. They are usually biological males who have all or part of their genitals removed surgically, and most become hijras voluntarily in their teens or twenties. They dress and live as females and are referred to as daughter, sister, grandmother, or aunt.

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roles and traits we assign to gender—as an unambiguous, two-category system. According to this view, you're either male or female from birth to death, and you have no other option. Chromosomes, hormones, and genitalia determine your identity—the way you see yourself, the way you interact with others, and the activities you engage in every day. Culture plays no role. Essentialists are generally found outside sociology in fields such as medicine, theology, and biology and within sociology in the field of sociobiology. Some sociobiologists reduce male-female relationships to the biological function of procreation.

constructionists those who believe that notions of gender are socially determined, such that a dichotomous system is just one possibility among many

Most mainstream sociologists, however, use a **constructionist** approach to gender: they see gender as a social construction and acknowledge the possibility that the male-female categories aren't the only way of classifying



Two-spirits Berdaches (left), a term used by anthropologists and sociologists but considered insulting by many Native Americans, provide an example of a third gender that is neither male nor female. Hijras (right) occupy a similar place in the society of India. It is considered good luck to have a hijra at a wedding or at the birth of a male child.

Like the berdache, hijras take part in the religious life of their people; they are specifically mentioned (and thus validated) in the epic Indian Hindu texts as having been recognized by the deity Rama. Today, the presence of hijras at weddings and at the births of male children is thought to be auspicious.

The berdache and hijra may sound similar to cross-dressers and transsexuals in Western society, but the analogy isn't entirely appropriate. For one thing, because of our two-gender system, we would still refer to someone who appeared to be a male but who felt like a female as "he"; if that same person decided to undergo sex-reassignment surgery, afterward we would call that individual "she." There is no room in our language for anything else. A berdache or hijra, on the other hand, is always referred to by that term, not "he" or "she." Keep in mind, then, that characteristics we think of as definitive, such as sexuality, dress, and biological gender, may be viewed differently in other cultures and time periods.

individuals. Nor are the systems of gender inequality that result from these labels necessary or natural. Constructionists believe that the meaning of masculinity and femininity may differ drastically in different societies and historical periods. We'll use a variety of sociological perspectives in this inquiry but will find ourselves returning again and again to constructionism as a helpful way to comprehend both the phenomenon of gender inequality and the theories that attempt to explain it.

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality can be found in all past and present societies. It invariably takes the form of **patriarchy**, or male domination. There is little evidence that a matriarchal (female-dominated) society has ever existed, although some societies have been more pro-feminine than

patriarchy literally meaning "rule of the father"; a male-dominated society



The Function of Gender Inequality In the 1950s, Talcott Parsons argued that gendered role expectations upheld the traditional family. Male "breadwinners" fulfilled an instrumental role by being task oriented and authoritative, while female "homemakers" embodied an expressive role by providing support and nurturing. *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* featured the prototypical family of that era.

others. The Vanatinai, for example, make up a small society in New Guinea in which women share equal access to positions of prestige, power, and control over the means of production (Lepowsky 1993).

From the patriarchal point of view, gender inequality can be traced back to biological differences in early societies, when activities like hunting and warfare were more essential to the livelihood of human groups. Women could not participate as effectively as men in these activities because of their lesser physical strength and because of the demands of bearing and nursing children. Therefore a division of labor arose, with women handling activities within the secured, "home" territory. Men delivered the scarcest and most prized resources to the group, such as game from hunting or territory from warfare, and thus became powerful by controlling the distribution of these resources.

instrumental role the position of the family member who provides the family's material support and is often an authority figure

expressive role the position of the family member who provides emotional support and nurturing

But this account of the origins of gender inequality does not explain its persistence in contemporary societies. Physical strength is no longer required in the vast majority of jobs. Nor are large numbers of children required for the continuation of society, and women are not necessarily restricted in their activities because of the demands of caring for them. Theories of modern gender stratification must therefore look beyond biological sex differences.

Macro Theoretical Perspectives

There are two major macrosociological theories of gender inequality. Functionalists generally believe that there are still social roles better suited to one gender than the other, and societies are more stable when norms are fulfilled by the appropriate sex. In particular, they emphasize how a particular "female" role may work in tandem with a particular "male" role within the family. Talcott Parsons, for example, identified two complementary roles (Parsons and Bales 1955). One is an **instrumental role**: being task oriented, a "breadwinner," and an authority figure. The other is an **expressive role**: providing emotional support and nurturing. The expressive role is crucial not only to the care of children but also for stabilizing the personality of the instrumental partner against the stresses of the competitive world. In this view, since women are considered better suited to the expressive role and men to the instrumental role, gender segregation serves to uphold the traditional family and its social functions.

Expressive and instrumental roles may be complementary, but the social rewards for filling them are far from equal. The functionalist view does not explain very well why gender relations are characterized by such inequality. While the work of raising children and maintaining a household is intensive and difficult, there is a tendency to dismiss it as being unskilled and instinctive, which results in the devaluation of traditionally feminine work. Those who support a patriarchal society argue that this is again because resources provided by men in their instrumental roles are ultimately more valuable. This value, however, is being questioned in light of evidence indicating that juvenile delinquency and crime rates are higher when there is no adult supervision in the home and that expressive roles are thus important. The functionalist view also fails to acknowledge that families are often sources of social instability, with violence within families all too common.

Conflict theorists take a different approach. According to this perspective, men have historically had access to most of society's material resources and privileges, and consequently they generally seek to maintain their dominant

status. Thus, conflict theorists see gender inequality in much the same way as they see race and class—as manifestations of exploitation.

Some conflict theorists argue that gender inequality is just a derivative of class inequality and that it therefore originates with private property. This theory was introduced by Friedrich Engels in 1884. Engels noted that capitalists (the owners of property) benefited from maintaining patriarchal families, with women in the private sphere and men in the public workplace, in at least two ways. Women do the work of reproducing the labor force on which the capitalists depend without receiving any direct compensation, and they serve as an inexpensive "reserve army" of labor when the need arises. Engels suggested that if private property were abolished, the material inequalities producing social classes would disappear, and there would no longer be powerful interests forcing women into domestic roles.

Conflict theorists point out that whether or not gender inequality is a product of class conflict, all men benefit from it in the short term. Zillah Eisenstein (1979) notes that men stand to lose a good deal if gender segregation disappears: they would have to do more unpaid work or pay to have their homes kept up and children cared for; they would have to find jobs in a larger and more competitive market; and they would lose some power and prestige if they were no longer the most viable breadwinners.

Interactionist Perspectives

While conflict theorists and functionalists focus on gender from a macrosociological perspective, interactionists emphasize how gender is socially constructed and maintained in our everyday lives. According to interactionists, gender identity is so important to our social selves that we can barely interact with anyone without first determining that person's gender. We need to categorize, and we need to be categorizable as well. For some people, this is no easy matter.

transgendered term describing an individual whose sense of gender identity is at odds with her or his physical sex but who has not necessarily sought sex-reassignment surgery

For example, **transgendered** (or TG) individuals' sense of self and gender identity differ from their physical sex. A TG person may have female genitalia, for instance, but identify as a man. The challenge for TG people is to present a social gender identity that differs from the expectations others may have of them. The case of Thomas (born Tracy) Beatie, described at the beginning of this chapter, is such an example.

In the 1960s, Harold Garfinkel (1967/1984), in one of the first studies to show how gender is based on interaction, conducted intensive interviews with "Agnes," a person born with male genitalia and raised as a boy, who was undergoing sex-reassignment treatment (including surgery and counseling) at the UCLA medical center. While Agnes had always known that she was a "120% natural normal woman," it was only when she was 17 that she began to learn how to "do being female"—to look, behave, and talk like a woman. Agnes got a job and a roommate—even a boyfriend—and set about learning what would be expected of her as a woman. She carefully adopted her roommate's style of dress, makeup, and body language; she listened to what her friends said and how they spoke. She learned how to maintain proper deference to her male boss at work, and she listened to her boyfriend and his female family members as they expressed their expectations for her as a future wife and mother. Unlike other women, though, Agnes had to take extra precautions, such as avoiding sexual intercourse with her boyfriend

TABLE 10.2 ***Theory in Everyday Life***

Perspective	Approach to Gender Inequality	Case Study: Male- and Female-Dominated Occupations
FUNCTIONALISM	Sex determines which roles men and women are best suited to; it is more appropriate for men to play instrumental roles and for women to play expressive roles.	Women are naturally more nurturing and thus make better nurses and teachers of young children; men are naturally more logical and thus make better lawyers and computer programmers.
CONFLICT THEORY	Because of the traditional division of labor in families, males have had more access to resources and privileges and have sought to maintain their dominance.	Male-dominated occupations generally hold more prestige and are better paid; women may encounter difficulties entering male-dominated occupations, whereas men may more easily succeed in female-dominated occupations.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Gender is learned through the process of socialization; gender inequalities are reproduced through interactions with family, peers, schools, and the media.	Girls and boys are socialized differently and may be encouraged to seek out gender-appropriate training, college majors, and career goals, leading them to enter male- and female-dominated occupations.

gender role socialization the lifelong process of learning to be masculine or feminine, primarily through four agents of socialization: families, schools, peers, and the media

social learning the process of learning behaviors and meanings through social interaction

(not too unusual in the early 1960s), wearing skirts and other clothing that would disguise her male anatomy, and avoiding activities (such as swimming at the beach) that would make her differences obvious until after she had gotten surgery. "Passing" as a female was a good deal of work for Agnes, and she constantly dealt with the fear that her secret would be discovered. But even Garfinkel, who knew her secret already, found her enactment of femininity quite convincing. Indeed, he was utterly charmed by her.

Even though you may think you have nothing in common with Agnes or other TG people, you actually enact gender in much the same way Agnes did. It is this process of observing and learning the feminine and masculine behaviors of others to which we now turn.

Gender Role Socialization

Gender role socialization—the subtle, pervasive process of becoming masculine or feminine—begins early and continues throughout our lives. It is accomplished primarily by the four major agents of socialization: families, schools, peers, and the media, though other social institutions, such as religion, may also play a part in the process.

Family

Families are usually the primary source of socialization. Indeed, Kara Smith (2005) argues that gender role socialization begins even before birth. Because the sex of the fetus now can be determined in utero, families may begin relating to the new baby as either a girl or a boy far in advance of the baby's arrival. Smith's research demonstrates how knowing the baby's sex affects how the mother talks to her fetus—the choice of words as well as tone of voice. Once babies are born, female and male clothes, rooms, and toys will differ, as will the stories the children are told.

Most telling, however, is the way in which significant others—parents, siblings, extended family, and caregivers—interact with the baby. Through **social learning**, the process of learning behavior and meanings through social interaction, babies respond to and internalize the expectations of others around them. For example, a baby girl who is treated gently may observe the roughhousing of baby boys with alarm. Sometimes there is a conscious effort to instill certain behaviors in children—by reprimanding a young boy, for example, for crying. At other times, social learning happens in a more subtle way, as the baby learns through observation, imitation, and play. Children rather quickly begin to exhibit gender-stereotyped behaviors. By the age of two, they are aware of their own and others' gender, and by age three, they begin to identify specific traits associated with each gender.

Gender pervades every aspect of family life. It may be implicit in the chores or privileges girls and boys are given (washing the dishes vs. mowing the lawn), the way they are disciplined or punished, where they go or don't go, what they are encouraged or forbidden to do. Lessons such as "that's not very ladylike" and "big boys don't cry" are echoed in children's literature, in toys made specifically for girls or boys, and in the games they play. And as we grow up, we are always watching our other family members, using them as role models for our own beliefs and behaviors. In adulthood, our families may still influence what kind of career or mate we choose, how we run our household, and how we raise our own children.

Schools

Differences in the educational experiences of girls and boys also begin to appear early, both in the classroom and on the playground. By the fifth grade, gender norms are firmly



Gender Role Socialization Our families are among the primary agents of gender socialization. From a very young age, we learn and internalize gendered behaviors from our parents and siblings.

established, as can be seen in the segregation that takes place even in co-ed schools. Girls and boys are frequently put in same-sex groups and assigned gender-stereotyped tasks, such as playing with dolls or playing with trucks. Same-sex groups also form on the playground, with girls and boys engaging in different kinds of social and athletic activities (Thorne 1993).

One of the key areas of difference is in the way that teachers, both women and men, typically interact with students. Whether or not they realize it, teachers tend to favor boys in several ways. Boys receive more attention and instructional time and are more likely to be called on in class. And boys are posed with more challenging questions or tasks, and are given more praise for the quality of their work. Boys are also, however, more likely to make teachers angry by misbehaving and therefore to receive some form of punishment more often (D. Smith 1999).

Despite boys' favorable treatment, girls in elementary school tend to earn higher grades. But their academic achievements are often discounted. In fact, the media often paint this gender discrepancy as a crisis. For example, Thomas Mortenson at the Pell Institute observed in 2002: "There's 170,000 more bachelor's degrees awarded to women than men. That's 170,000 women that will not be able to find a college-educated man to marry" (Goodman 2002). When they do perform well, girls are typically credited for hard work rather than intellectual ability. They are encouraged to focus on social skills or appearance rather than brain power. By the time they reach middle or junior high school, girls begin to slip behind and to lose their sense of academic self-esteem. These troubles are compounded in adolescent girls, who begin to feel uneasy about competing with boys, embarrassed by their own success, or uncomfortable engaging in male-dominated subjects like math or science.

Gender role socialization in schools can take other forms as well. Textbooks often still contain sexist language and gender stereotypes. Women and minorities are underrepresented, both as subjects and as authors (Robson 2001). In the social structure of the school itself, women tend to be concentrated at the lower levels, as teachers and aides, while men tend to occupy upper management and administrative positions. In 2007, a larger proportion of women than men had finished high school, but at the college level, a larger proportion of men received a bachelor's or a higher degree (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). In such ways, schooling as a whole, and over the course of a lifetime, reinforces gender stereotypes.

Peers

In Western societies, peer groups are an increasingly important agent of socialization. By the age of three, children develop a preference for same-sex playmates, a tendency that increases markedly as childhood progresses. Children in preschool are three times more likely to play with same-sex playmates—eleven times more likely in kindergarten—and it is not until well after puberty that this pattern changes even a little (Maccoby and Jacklin 1987). While some have argued that such gender segregation is the *result* of inherent differences between men and women, there is evidence to support the notion that same-sex peer groups can help *create* gendered behavior. Researchers have found, for example, that when children play with same-sex peers, their activities are more likely to be gender typed (girls have pretend tea parties, for example) than when boys and girls play together (Fabes, Martin, and Hanish 2003). In addition, children (especially boys) are punished (mocked) by their peers for crossing over these gendered borders (Thorne 1993).

The need to impress others and to feel popular with peers increases in the teenage years. Boys tend to gain prestige through athletic ability, a well-developed sense of humor, or taking risks and defying norms. Girls tend to gain prestige through social position and physical attractiveness. It's easy to imagine what kind of behaviors result from such peer pressure and the consequences of falling short in any way. In the extreme, it can lead to bullying and rebellious behavior on the part of boys and to eating disorders with girls. Similar pressures in regard to dating and mating continue through the early adult years as well.

The Media

From a variety of media sources, such as movies, comic books, or popular music, we learn "how to behave, how to be accepted, what to value, and what is normal" as well as "how gender fits into society" (Barner 1999). When it comes



The Changing Culture of Gaming How are young women challenging stereotypes about videogame fans?

to television, there is no question that "sex-role behavior is portrayed in highly stereotypic fashion in virtually every aspect" of the programming (McGhee and Frueh 1980). Boys and girls learn that certain activities and attitudes are more appropriate for one gender than for the other. Girls should be beautiful, caring, sensitive, and reserved, while boys should be assertive, strong, and analytic. This starts at a particularly young age; chillingly, "by the time a child reaches kindergarten, she will 'know' more television characters than real people" (Barner 1999). In addition to TV, magazines like *Seventeen*, *Teen*, and *Young Miss* are aimed mostly at adolescents. Some have even speculated that increases in anorexia and bulimia among teenage girls can be linked to the images of women they see in the media (Kilbourne 1999). Teenage girls may consider actresses and models the standard of beauty to aspire to, even though such women "often are far below the normal weight recommendations" (Schlenker, Caron, and Halteman 1998).

The case of video games presents some contradictions regarding media and gender role socialization. What was once thought of as a male bastion is becoming increasingly more gender balanced. It used to be that the stereotype of a video game enthusiast was a male player who preferred first-person shooter, or what is referred to as hard core, video games, with popular titles such as *Mortal Kombat*, *Halo*, and *Grand Theft Auto*. While males still make up some 60 percent of video game players, some interesting changes are happening to the market. Females are beginning to represent a greater portion of game players, particularly when it comes to online games played on computers (as opposed to video games played on consoles). And the games that they are interested in most are multiplayer games such as *World of Warcraft* or the all-time best-selling *The Sims* series, both of which focus on building relationships. An even greater number of females play arcade-style, or what are referred to as casual, games, where they represent 74 percent of all players. Gaming is no longer dominated by males, but the games that boys and girls choose to play may still be guided by gender differences.

For many centuries of human history, children have learned how to act appropriately from family, peers, and school. As the influence of the media becomes more pervasive in our society, we can see how it may compete with or even contradict that of other agents of socialization. At the same time, the media also serve to socialize families, peers and educators, giving them an even more overarching power in society.

DATA WORKSHOP



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

The Fashion Police: Gender and the Rules of Beauty

This workshop will help you identify the messages about gender that permeate our lives through the media. You will be using existing sources as a research method and engaging in a content analysis (please see Chapter 3 for a review). Look through *two* magazines from *each* of the following lists of women's and men's magazines (there may be other comparable titles that you might also include). Keep in mind that you will need to photocopy or cut pages from these magazines at a later point.



Rules of Beauty What do magazines like these tell us about the "rules" governing male and female appearance in our society?

- List A: *Cosmopolitan, Elle, Essence, In Style, Glamour, Latina, Seventeen*
- List B: *Details, Esquire, GQ, Maxim, Men's Health, Men's Journal*

Immerse yourself in the *visual images* and the accompanying text in these magazines—in both articles and advertisements. As you look at the photos, cartoons, drawings, headlines, captions, and other features, ask yourself what they say about what is attractive for both males and females. Choose some pages from each magazine that stand out to you, and jot down answers to the following questions:

- What types of bodies are displayed? What shapes, sizes, colors?
- What kinds of activities are shown?
- What does the text say about the images?
- How do these images reflect the "rules" about male and female beauty in our society?

Next, compare and contrast the "rules of beauty" in the magazines from list A with those from list B. What are the similarities and differences, and how do you explain them? Besides gender, how do other factors—race, class, age, sexual orientation—seem to affect the rules of beauty in these magazines?

Finally, and just for fun, use some of the images and text you've found in the magazines to construct the "perfect" man or woman. Take "officially beautiful" parts from selected images and put them together to form a whole person. What does this person look like? Something more like Frankenstein's monster than a supermodel? What kinds of words are used to describe the feminine or masculine ideal? What does that say about expectations for women and men? Perhaps when such words and images are broken down into their component parts, they are not so attractive after all.

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: From your answers to the questions above, prepare some written notes that you can refer to in class. Make sure to bring examples you've chosen from the magazines. Compare your notes and experiences with those of other students in small-group discussions.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay analyzing your data and addressing the specific standards of beauty presented in the magazines. Attach pages from the magazine you refer to in your essay.

Sex, Gender, and Life Chances

If two infants, one girl and one boy, are born at the same time in the same location from parents of similar racial and socioeconomic background, sociologists can predict answers to questions like the following: Who is more likely to live longer, go to college, or go to prison? Who might make a good living or live in poverty? Who is more likely to be married, divorced, or widowed, be a single parent or the victim of a violent crime, or join the military?

In this section, we will analyze how gender affects our lives. We will look specifically at how gender expectations shape our experiences with family, health, education, work and income, and criminal justice. For instance, women traditionally are caretakers of their families and more likely than men to go to college. Men make more money than women and are more likely to head religious institutions. These conditions are the result of values and norms that encourage certain behaviors in women and men.

It is important to remember, however, that gender is intertwined with other factors such as race and class. Therefore, it is difficult to separate out the effects of gender on categories like marriage, education, and work. Single women with children are probably more likely to live in poverty, less likely to have a college education, and more likely to work in service-sector jobs. However, a person is not automatically poor or destined to be divorced because she is female. The categories all work together to construct the complexity of a person's life.

Family

When it comes to family, men are more likely than women to report never having been married, perhaps reflecting the stronger societal pressure for women to marry at some point in their lives. Men are also slightly more likely than women to report being married. About 9.2 percent of women are widowed (only 2.4 percent of men are), and 10.9 percent of women (8.4 percent of men) are currently divorced (U.S. Census Bureau 2008e; Figure 10.1). Some of these differences may be accounted for by the longer lifespans of women.

Divorce seems to be much more difficult for women with children than for men. Women are more likely to retain the primary caregiving role after divorce and to suffer financially because of it. In 2006, about five of every six custodial parents were mothers (or 83.8 percent). More than half of all custodial parents did not receive child support payments.

FIGURE 10.1 Marital Status of U.S. Women and Men, 2008

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau 2008e

In 2005, divorced women who did receive child support reported, on average, an income of $34,297, while divorced men who received child support reported an income of $45,676. For the women who did not receive any child support, the average income was $24,475; for men, it was $37,751. Thus, women without child support were reporting incomes of just a few thousand above the federal poverty line, while men in similar situations actually seemed to have more money than men who did receive child support (U.S. Census Bureau 2007a).

The legacy of a woman's traditional role as caretaker of her family can be seen in a variety of statistical data. First, women are more likely than men to be single parents. Single women head more than 16.7 million households, and single men only 2.3 million.

And while women are contributing to household income by working outside the home, they are finding that they are still responsible for being the family's primary caretaker. In the workplace, this creates problems. Time taken out of work in order to care for sick children is seen as nonproductive time, and women who do take such time off may face discrimination (Wharton and Blair-Loy 2002). And most women, when they leave work, still face household chores at home—the "second shift" (see the Data Workshop on pp. 282–83).

Health

Of the almost 300 million Americans, more than half are female. Why are there more women? One reason is that women live longer; females born in 2010 are expected to live for an average of 81.4 years, whereas males are expected to live 75.6 years (U.S. Census Bureau 2008h). Research by Thomas Perls and Ruth Fretts at Harvard Medical School suggests that the sex hormones estrogen and testosterone may be a possible cause. For example, young men aged 15 to 24 are four or five times likelier than young women to die from car accidents, homicides, and drownings. After age 24, the gap narrows again until middle age. Then, starting at age 55, death rates for men increase again, this time from heart disease, stroke, suicide, car accidents, and illness related to smoking and alcohol consumption. Perls and Fretts note that testosterone is linked to aggressive and violent behavior as well as heart disease and harmful cholesterol in the blood. On the other hand, estrogen lowers harmful cholesterol and reduces the likelihood of heart disease and stroke. These days, however, more women are engaged in stress-related behavior such as working outside the home, smoking, and drinking—so the gap may be closing. For example, female deaths from lung cancer have tripled in the last 20 years, leading Perls and Fretts to label smoking as "the great equalizer" (Perls and Fretts 1998).

While both women and men suffer from heart disease and cancer in fairly equal numbers, other health disorders are gender related. One example is depression, which women are twice as likely to suffer from as men (Kessler 2003). Historically, the medical professions have diagnosed women far more than men with depression, hysteria, and other mental conditions. Thus, women have been denied equal rights and equitable working conditions and pay because they were thought, as a category, to be mentally unfit. This issue, however, is controversial. Some maintain that the larger percentage of depressed women may be due to reporting rather than the actual numbers of cases. In other words, women may be more likely to report such symptoms, whereas men may ignore them or may feel a greater sense of stigma in reporting them (Byrne 1981).

Education

Women are more likely than men to finish high school and attend college. Of the estimated 16.6 million students in college in 2007, approximately 9.5 million were women and 7.1 million were men (*Christian Science Monitor* 2007). In fact, since 1980, women have increasingly outnumbered men in college. However, men have been more likely to attain four-year and advanced degrees. In 2005, 28.5 percent of men 25 years and over had a bachelor's degree or higher compared with 26.0 percent of women. (Even though women numerically earn more bachelor's and master's degrees, men proportionately earn more.) Men are also more likely to earn more money per degree granted (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).

In fact, men out-earn women at every level of education, from incomplete high school to advanced degrees. These wage discrepancies make gender inequality very difficult to ignore. Women with four-year and professional degrees earn significantly less than their male counterparts, as shown in Table 10.3.

Work and Income

In whatever aspect of work we analyze—the rates of participation in the labor force, the kinds of jobs, the levels of pay, the balance between work and family—gender inequality is highly visible. For example, in 2006, 73.5 percent of men were in the labor force, but only 59.4 percent of women (though women's participation rates have been increasing over time). Interestingly, the rates of unemployment for both women and men were equal that year, with 4.6 percent for women and 4.6 percent for men. Because traditional family dynamics still endure, women are more likely than men to be found outside the labor force altogether (U.S. Census Bureau 2008b).

Marriage seems to have opposite effects on women and men's participation rates. Single women are more likely to work than married women, while married men are more likely to work than single men. In 2005, 66 percent of single women (as opposed to 61 percent of married women) worked, while 77 percent of married men (compared with nearly 70 percent of single men) did. This discrepancy could possibly be explained by the assumption that men are head of the household, and single women are considered responsible for their own finances.

Since 1980, the number of mothers in the labor force has been on the rise. Only 38 percent of all women who gave birth in 1980 reported also participating in the labor force that year. In 2007, the number of working women with children under the age of 18 rose to 71 percent, somewhat less than the peak of 72.3 percent in 2000. The proportion of unmarried mothers—those who were widowed, divorced, separated, or never married—who were in the labor force in 2007 was even higher at 76.5 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008a).

Many jobs are gendered; they traditionally have been and continue to be performed by women or men. As Table 10.4 shows, nurses, kindergarten teachers, dental hygienists, secretaries, paralegals, and housekeepers are female-dominated professions, whereas airplane pilots, auto mechanics, fire fighters, carpenters, mechanical engineers, and the clergy are male-dominated professions. In 2007, 96.7 percent of all secretaries and 97.3 percent of teachers of young children were women. Only 0.7 percent of all auto mechanics and 4.2 percent of all pilots were women. Gendered jobs have far-reaching consequences. For example, physicians often earn four or more times as much as do nurses. So, when women constitute 91.7 percent of all nurses but only 30 percent of all physicians, the monetary stakes are striking.

TABLE 10.3 Hourly Earnings for Men and Women by Education Level, 1973–2005

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	HOURLY EARNINGS, 1973 (2005 DOLLARS)		HOURLY EARNINGS, 2005		PERCENT CHANGE IN REAL EARNINGS, 1973–2005 (2005 DOLLARS)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Less than high school	$14.68	$8.85	$11.48	$8.88	–24%	0%
High school diploma	$17.41	$10.96	$15.65	$12.34	–11%	9%
Some college	$17.79	$11.84	$17.76	$14.18	0%	17%
College graduate	$24.01	$16.40	$28.06	$21.30	15%	27%
Advanced degree	$26.67	$21.72	$35.67	$27.08	27%	21%

SOURCE: Mishel, Bernstein, and Alegretto 2007

TABLE 10.4 **Selected Occupations by Gender, 2007**

OCCUPATION	PERCENT MEN	PERCENT WOMEN
Dental hygienists	0.8	99.2
Preschool and kindergarten teachers	2.7	97.3
Secretaries and administrative assistants	3.3	96.7
Registered nurses	8.3	91.7
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	10.8	89.2
Paralegals and legal assistants	11.6	88.4
Librarians	16.9	83.1
Travel agents	24.7	75.3
Waiters and waitresses	26.0	74.0
Customer service representatives	31.5	68.5
Psychologists	35.6	64.4
Retail salespersons	48.9	51.9
Medical scientists	51.9	49.1
News reporters and correspondents	57.9	42.1
Lawyers	67.4	32.6
Physicians and surgeons	70.0	30.0
Chief executives	74.4	25.6
Computer programmers	75.3	24.7
Clergy	84.9	15.1
Fire fighters	94.7	5.3
Aircraft pilots and flight engineers	95.8	4.2
Carpenters	98.5	1.5
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	99.3	0.7

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008b

Why are some jobs considered best performed by women and others by men? Why are women vastly underrepresented as pilots and auto mechanics and men nearly absent as nurses, secretaries, and child-care workers? Socially constructed categories of occupations are extremely resilient. Despite advances in workplace technologies that would enable both women and men to perform similarly in jobs, men still vastly outnumber women in certain professions, especially those with high salaries and prestige. It is also interesting to note that jobs that are traditionally female are consistently undervalued and underpaid. "Pink-collar" jobs—nurses, secretaries, librarians—are considered less desirable in a patriarchal society (England 1992).

feminization of poverty the economic trend showing that women are more likely than men to live in poverty, caused in part by the gendered gap in wages, the higher proportion of single mothers compared to single fathers, and the increasing costs of childcare

Income levels and poverty rates also show inequality between women and men. In 2007, men earned an average of $44,627, while the average for women was $34,393. The earnings ratio (sometimes called the earnings gap) has improved since the 1960s and 70s; however, the 2007 earnings ratio of 77:100 still translates to 77 cents earned by women for each dollar earned by men (Figure 10.2).

In 2007, the median income for married-couple households was $72,785. For male-headed households with no female present, the median income was $49,839—dramatically higher than the $33,370 for female-headed households with no male present. The median household income for women living alone was $24,294, while for single men it was $36,767. Finally, women are more likely to live in poverty than men. This situation, often referred to as the **feminization of poverty**, results from a combination of social forces including the gendered gap in wages, the higher

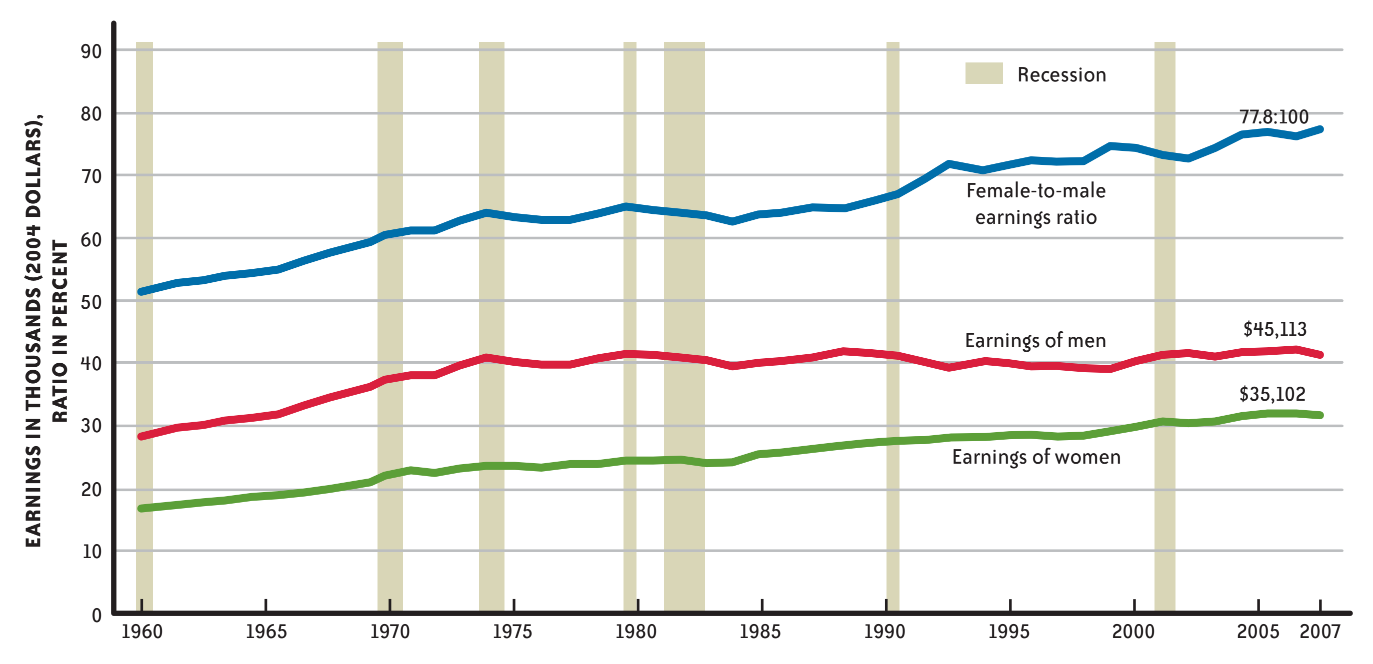


FIGURE 10.2 Female-to-Male Earnings Ratio, 1960–2007 The earnings gap between men and women has narrowed somewhat, but it has yet to close.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau 2008c

proportion of single women taking on the financial responsibility of children, and increasing costs of child care. Of the 37 million Americans living below the poverty line in 2007, females constituted the largest group, whether living alone or in female-headed households (U.S. Census Bureau 2008c).

The Military

The military provides a particular case study when it comes to issues of work and gender. The huge institution that is the military is composed mostly of men. As such, it presents a relatively hostile environment for women. In 2006, only 14.6 percent of enlisted personnel were female. Of the reserves, only 17 percent were women. At the end of 2006, 85.4 percent of the five branches of the military, including the Coast Guard, were male (Figure 10.3). In 2008, Lieutenant General Ann E. Dunwoody became the first woman promoted to the rank of four-star general in the U.S. armed forces.

Slightly more women than men in the military report being the object of unwanted sexual attention. However, women are far more likely than men to report gender harassment. Laura Miller (1997) makes the distinction that gender harassment, rather than being sexual in nature, instead is used to enforce traditional gender norms, such as aggression in males and nurturing in females, as well as to punish violations of these norms. Interestingly, men in Miller's study were more likely to report being harassed by their drill sergeants, while women were more likely to be harassed by their fellow trainees.

Criminal Justice

The experience of men and women differs with regard to almost every social institution, and the criminal justice system is no exception. The social construction of masculinity as aggressive, dominant, and physical translates directly into statistics regarding gender and crime. Men are more likely to die violent deaths and to be victims of assault. Women are slightly more likely to be victims of personal theft and much more likely to be victims of rape. Also, women are far more likely to be victimized by their intimate partners (spouses or current or former boyfriends). Between 1998 and 2002, almost 85 percent of spouse abuse victims were female and a little more than 85 percent of dating partner abuse victims were female (U.S. Department of Justice 2005).

In analyzing arrest rates for 2007, we find that men are overwhelmingly represented in nearly all categories, including murder, rape, sex offenses, theft, assault, and drug charges. In only two categories do women and girls outnumber men and boys: prostitution and runaways (a juvenile offense). In 2007, there were 22,560 arrests of women for prostitution and 10,861 arrests of men for the same charge; 38,667 girls

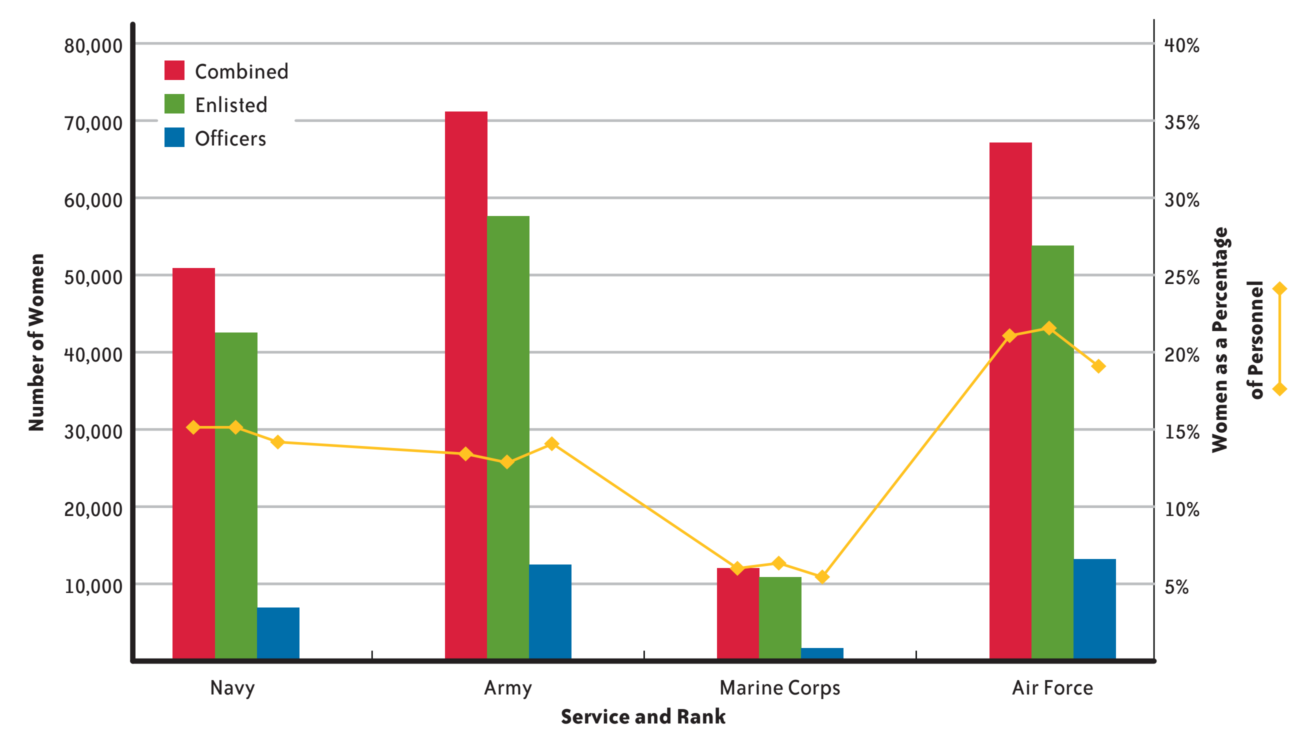


FIGURE 10.3 **Women in the Military**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center 2006

were arrested as runaways compared with 30,586 boys. It is important for us as sociologists to recognize this discrepancy as an example of how crime is influenced by the social construction of gender. Because of the tendency to think of girls as weak and needing protection, female runaways are more likely to be reported as missing by parents as well as intercepted by the police. On the other hand, because males are perceived as being more likely to be involved in violent and property crime, they are generally kept under more scrutiny by the police than are females. Of the nearly 2 million people in correctional institutions, the vast majority (around 90 percent) are men (U.S. Department of Justice 2007a).

By analyzing visible indicators such as labor participation rates, income levels, arrest rates, and experiences related to the family, work, education, and the military, we can easily see the real consequences of gender inequality: women and men experience life differently. So what can we say about the life outcomes of our two infants? The female is more likely to live longer. Though they are both likely to marry, she is more likely to be divorced or widowed. She is more likely to graduate from high school and to attend college. However, if the male also attends college, he is more likely to graduate. If they earn the same degree, he will probably earn more money. Each has a good chance of ending up in certain professions (the military, nursing) over others. He is more likely to die a violent death, while she is more likely to experience rape or some other crime perpetrated by someone with whom she's intimate. While their gender categories surely do not guarantee these experiences, we as sociologists can safely make such predictions.

second shift the unpaid housework and childcare often expected of women after they complete their day's paid labor



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

The Second Shift: Gendered Norms and Household Labor

The **second shift**, a term coined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild, refers to the unpaid work—cooking, cleaning, laundry, child care, home repair, yard work—that must be done at home after the day's paid labor is complete. For this Data Workshop, you will investigate second shift work by using interviews as a research method (see Chapter 3 for further

discussion) and asking a working parent about how he or she juggles family and work. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- Ask your working parent to be candid and to answer your questions as fully as possible. Ask if you can tape-record the interview for later transcription, or take detailed notes.
- Come up with a list of questions before you start the interview. Include some *open-ended* as well as *closed-ended* questions.
- For starters, ask the person to describe *everything* he or she does in a typical day, perhaps using the previous day as an example. Be sure nothing is overlooked. For example, if the description starts with the parent's arrival at the office, remind him or her of earlier morning activities (such as making breakfast or getting children ready for school).
- Try to identify all the types of work that your respondent does in a typical day, including paid work, unpaid work, interaction work, emotion work, and so on.
- Find out how tasks are divided between members of the household (spouse/partner, children, others). Also try to determine how completing all these tasks (or not completing them) affects his or her relationships with other members of the household.

As you conduct the interview, you'll notice that some tasks must be done every day, or even several times each day—cooking meals, for example. Other tasks (such as laundry) are done less often but on a regular basis. Still others are irregular or seasonal: raking leaves or taking the car in for a tune-up. You'll also find that some tasks are focused on people (like planning birthday parties), whereas others (cleaning out the gutters) are focused on objects. And some tasks are paid labor, while some are not.

After completing the interview, look at all the tasks your respondents have mentioned. Then ask *yourself* these questions:

- Does there appear to be a gendered division of labor at home?
- How are the tasks divided?
- Who does most of the daily tasks?

Chances are, you'll find that there are gendered patterns in terms of who does what at home. Studies show that men tend to participate in more instrumental tasks, such as car repair and yard work, jobs that are more irregular and seasonal, while women tend to the daily needs of their family by doing the endless tasks of cooking and cleaning and by engaging in expressive work such as mediating arguments and calming upset children. This is how women rack up an extra month of housework a year (that's a month of 24-hour days)! What effects might these inequities have on marriages and live-in relationships? Does one person always seem to be doing more work than the other person? What are some possible solutions to this problem?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare some written notes, and compare your notes and experiences with those of other students in small-group discussions. Take this opportunity to learn more about how families do the everyday work required to keep a household running and about the different hierarchies of inequalities that shape this work.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay analyzing your interview data. Make sure to use specific quotations from your respondent, and include a transcript of the interview (or your notes) as an attachment.

Gender and Language

- *What is the difference between a stud and a slut?*
- *What do the following have in common: bitch, cow, heifer, angel, baby, doll, sweetie pie, cupcake, sugar?*
- *What do the following have in common: man-made, mankind, manpower, manslaughter?*

To answer these questions, we need to think about how language reflects culture. Some sociologists argue that language shapes culture, while others say the opposite. In any case, by looking at our language, we can see how certain words reflect cultural values and norms, particularly sexism.

For instance, positions of power and authority often directly emphasize the male gender in their very names. Examples are "congressman," "chairman," "policeman," "fireman," and "mailman." Such words imply that one gender is more suited for a particular job than the other. Other words, like "nurse/doctor," "flight attendant/pilot," and "secretary/executive," have been gendered without the use of explicit male or female markers. In this case, markers are usually attached if the job holder is of "the other" gender: "woman doctor," "woman pilot," "woman astronaut," "male nurse," and "male secretary." Again, these examples reinforce stereotypes of gendered jobs.



Hooking Up: Young Women in Peril or Just a New Way to Date?

Something happened to dating in 2001, when the longtime practice among college students of "hooking up" gained national attention. The American Values Institute (AVI) released its report to the great dismay of parents, educators, cultural critics, and policy makers. The study, by a team of sociologists at the University of Texas, entitled "Hooking Up, Hanging Out and Hoping for Mr. Right: College Women on Mating and Dating," looked at how young people meet and mate and examined their experiences with sexuality, courtship, and marriage. The findings shocked the nation and generated a firestorm of media coverage that has barely died down. While knowledge of this practice worried many, to students themselves, the notion of hooking up was commonplace and largely accepted, hardly a matter for such alarm.

Much of the concern centered around the meaning of "hooking up" and what exactly young people were up to. The perception was that hooking up meant casual sex without commitment, typically between people who were but brief acquaintances beforehand. Other terms were also used to refer to the behavior, including "booty call" and "friends with benefits." Some suggested that hooking up was connected to a variety of other social problems such as binge drinking, drug abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases. The media featured numerous stories told in moralistic terms about how the culture of the hook up was leading young women, especially, to their own demise with respect to any hope of having decent relationships and the possibility of marriage down the line. At the same time, others were celebrating the phenomenon, and books with titles such as *The Happy Hook-Up: A Single Girl's Guide to Casual Sex* and *Hooking Up: A Girl's All-Out Guide to Sex and Sexuality* appeared on the scene.

While the term *hooking up* gained great currency on campuses, the study revealed that 40 percent of women said they had experienced a hook up, with 10 percent reporting having done so more than six times. Regardless of the number of young people participating, the hook up had become the dominant script for interactions between college students. When asked to define hooking up, the majority of college students responded that it was "when a girl and a guy get together for a physical encounter and don't necessarily expect anything further." That physical encounter, however, could mean anything from kissing to oral sex or intercourse. The ambiguity of the term might, in part, account for its popularity, such that young people can remain vague about the nature or extent of an interaction when they say they hooked up with someone.

The AVI report warned that parents and other older adults were woefully unaware of how extraordinarily different today's behavior was from the "dating" of previous generations that characterized how couples formed. Women reported it was rare for men to ask them on a date, that they

The English language also seems to assume that the default category for all human experience is male. We have traditionally referred to the human race as "mankind" and noted that "all men are created equal." The root of words like "man-made," "manslaughter," and "manpower," "man," means "human." If something is man-made, it is made by humans. But clearly, not everyone experiences the world from a male perspective.

Our language is also a good site for analyzing double standards, which have long been researched by sociologists (Carns 1973; Sprecher, McKinney, and Orbuch 1987). For instance, in the workplace, aggressive men are called "go-getters," while aggressive women may be called "bitches." Men who frequently have sex are called "players," while women are called "sluts." To be called a player is a different experience than to be called a slut.



Hooking Up How do films such as *Superbad* (2007) portray hooking up? Does Kathleen Bogle's analysis contradict or support the media's depiction of students' sexual behavior?

would more often just "hang out," a loosely organized and undefined time together. Furthermore, after hanging out or hooking up, the women still did not know whether that constituted them as a couple. There was widespread confusion among women about how to navigate these encounters and about the rules and expectations for hook ups as well as relationships. The report concluded that although women aspire to be married and believe that college is a good place to meet a husband, the current practices of hooking up and hanging out were not leading to that goal.

In an effort to recast some of the controversy over hooking up and perhaps bring a more optimistic tone to the dialog, sociologist Kathleen Bogle released another study in 2008 based on extensive interviews with college students. Bogle proposed that hooking up was not synonymous with the "one night stand" but rather, like dating, was a system of socializing with the opposite sex for the purpose of finding romantic partners. The big difference, however, was that in dating people would get to know one another en route to sexual intimacy, while in hooking up the sex comes first. Bogle claims, however, that it is about more than just sex; it is also a way for students to find a relationship. Although there are no strings attached in hooking up, and more often than not it does not evolve into anything else, it can still lead some couples to become exclusive.

So just how worried should we be about the phenomenon of hooking up on campuses? Have the social and sexual mores of students become too lax? Are young people doomed to superficial and fleeting encounters that leave them empty and confused? Or are they simply celebrating sexual freedom and finding new ways of relating to one another? Whatever your opinion on the matter, it is clear that the dating and mating game has changed. And with the dominance of hooking up within the culture of the college social scene, young people may believe that they have few alternatives on the route to romance and marriage.

The behaviors are similar, but the labels have very different connotations. A 2001 study of sex education films that were aimed at adolescents found the player/slut double standard embedded in the actual film scripts (Hartley and Drew 2001). These films legitimized male sexual desire while minimizing female desire, implying that males should engage in sexual pursuit while females should wait to be pursued. Women are often referred to as "cows," "heifers," "babies," or "cupcakes." Boyfriends aren't usually called "baby dolls," and males don't call their male friends "heifers." Food must be consumed, babies must be coddled, animals must be controlled. Sociologists understand that these nicknames for women function as mechanisms of social control.

Along with words, speech patterns also reflect our sexist culture (Tannen 2001). Conversation analysts, sociologists

who study verbal and nonverbal language patterns, find that men dominate women in conversation. They are more likely to interrupt women than they are to interrupt men (Smith-Lovin and Brody 1989) and more likely to control the subject matter of conversations. Women tend to be more concerned with keeping a conversation going rather than with controlling its direction. However, some research suggests that authority rather than gender dictates conversation patterns (Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz 1985; C. Johnson 1994). Thus, women may control the conversation when they are in positions of legitimate authority, as a manager is when talking with her employee. Since men are more likely to occupy authoritative positions, however, they are still more likely to dominate in conversation.

It is worth noting that language can also reflect social change. It is now fairly common to see and hear "Will everyone please open his or her book" or "their book" in place of "his book." Also, increasingly, we hear gender-neutral references such as "mail carriers," "fire fighters," "servers," "chairpersons," and "humankind." These efforts at gender neutrality are efforts to reform sexist language. For if language shapes culture, then using gender-neutral language should facilitate social change. On the other hand, if language is shaped by culture, then the use of nonsexist words is a signal of positive social change.

feminism belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes; also the social movements organized around that belief

first wave the earliest period of feminist activism in the United States, including the period from the mid-nineteenth century until American women won the right to vote in 1920

suffrage movement the movement organized around gaining voting rights for women

The Women's Movement

Feminism is the belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes *and* the social movements organized around that belief. Thus, feminism is both a theoretical perspective and a social movement. It is important to keep in mind that feminist concepts and goals are not static but are always focused on bringing about greater gender equality in a particular time and place. Rebecca West, an early twentieth-century feminist, put it this way in 1913: "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is. I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute" (Shiach 1999).

First Wave

In the United States, the history of the women's movement can be divided into three historical waves. The **first wave** began with a convention held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott. The convention, numbering about three hundred people, issued a Declaration of Sentiments stating generally that "all men and women are created equal" and demanded specifically that women be given the right to vote. Stanton believed that in a democracy the right to vote was the fundamental right on which all others depended. Not surprisingly, then, the campaign to win the vote (known as the **suffrage movement**) became the cause most identified with the first wave of the women's movement, even though that goal would not be achieved until 1920. Neither Stanton nor Mott nor the well-known suffragist Susan B. Anthony would live to see victory. Of the one hundred women and men who signed



The Suffrage Movement Of the 100 women and men who signed the Declaration of Sentiments in Seneca Falls in 1848 only one, a young worker named Charlotte Woodward, lived to cast a ballot in 1920.

the Declaration of Sentiments, only one, a young worker named Charlotte Woodward, lived to cast a ballot.

Second Wave

Just as the first wave of feminism is most closely associated with the right to vote, the **second wave**, which took place during the 1960s and 70s, is associated with equal access to education and employment. The publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, the establishment of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, and the emergence of women's consciousness-raising groups were key events in second-wave feminism. In those decades, young activists felt that the women's movement had lost its momentum after the vote was won and that other issues needed to be addressed. In the opening pages of *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan spoke of "the problem that had no name," a problem that "lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women" (1963/2001, p. 55): the sense of limitation and dissatisfaction that many women felt with their lives.

During one of the most prosperous periods in American history, Friedan was discovering that countless women were unhappy with the traditional roles they had been assigned, that the "mystique of feminine fulfillment" was no longer so fulfilling (1963/2001, p. 18). Women were restricted from pursuing activities outside these traditional roles, whether by cultural norms or by actual laws that barred them from schools, workplaces, and professional organizations. Women who tried to breach these barriers were seen as "unfeminine." Some were even told, as North Carolina Senator Elizabeth Dole was when she entered Harvard Law School in 1962, that they were taking an opportunity away from a more deserving man.

second wave the period of feminist activity during the 1960s and 1970s often associated with the issues of women's equal access to employment and education

third wave the most recent period of feminist activity, focusing on issues of diversity and the variety of identities women can possess

So the second wave of the women's movement pushed for and achieved such reforms as equal opportunity laws, legislation against sexual harassment and marital rape, and a general increase in public awareness about gender discrimination in our society. Some of the public, however, reacted with hostility to women's demands for legal and cultural "liberation," and there continues to be a certain amount of backlash against feminist causes as a result.

Third Wave

Beginning in the 1980s and 90s, the **third wave** of feminism focused primarily on diversity. These feminists criticize the first two waves for concentrating on "women" as one category (mainly white and middle class) and marginalizing the



The Problem That Had No Name In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan (center) articulated a sense of limitation and dissatisfaction that many women felt with their lives.

male liberationism a movement that originated in the 1970s to discuss the challenges of masculinity

men's rights movement an offshoot of male liberationism whose members believe that feminism promotes discrimination against men

pro-feminist men's movement an offshoot of male liberationism whose members support feminism and believe that sexism harms both men and women

concerns of women of color, lesbians, and working-class women. Third-wave feminism is also concerned with the rights of women in all countries and with environmental and animal rights. The movement includes many if not most college students—even if you don't call yourself a feminist, you likely believe in feminist values, such as equality, diversity, and global interconnectedness. You are the third wave, and you will help make a difference.

The Men's Movement

The feminist movement has asked society to rethink what it means to be a man, and men have responded in a variety of ways. Some have countered feminists' arguments, some have agreed with and supported feminism, and some have taken positions somewhere in between. One thing that seems clear, however, is that what it means to be a man is no longer taken for granted; in everyday life and in popular culture, discussion of this issue is becoming more prevalent. Serious treatments include movies such as *Fight Club*, which starred Brad Pitt and Edward Norton. Humorous treatments include TV shows like *Home Improvement* with Tim Allen and *The Man Show* with Adam Corolla and Jimmy Kimmel and an entire new cable network, *Spike TV*, devoted to a male audience.

Such shows revolve around the idea that there is currently a "crisis of masculinity" (Bly 1992; Connell 1995; Faludi 1999). Michael Kimmel, for instance, suggests that the notion that American men are confused about what it means to be a "real man" has become "a cultural commonplace staring down at us from magazine racks and television talk shows" (1987, p. 5). In a nutshell, many men face some discomfort and anxiety about their masculinity and are coming together and organizing as men in an attempt to address their concerns.

Male Liberationism

In the mid-1970s, as the feminist critique of gender roles was being articulated, a movement called **male liberationism** began. Two widely read books, Warren Farrell's *The Liberated Man* (1975) and Herb Goldberg's *The Hazards of Being Male* (1976), pointed to evidence showing that men suffer from greater stress, poorer health, and a shorter life expectancy and argued that these were caused by pressures to achieve success combined with an inability to express themselves. These ideas became fairly popular, largely among middle-class heterosexual men, and some men sought counseling or formed discussion groups about "the male role" (Segal 1990). Male liberationist writers were initially open to feminism; however, as feminism began demanding more radical changes in culture and social structure, they felt under attack and became hostile to feminism. As a result, the male liberationist movement essentially split into two submovements, the men's rights movement and the pro-feminist men's movement.

The **men's rights movement** (which also includes the father's rights movement) argues that because of feminism, men are actually discriminated against and even oppressed in the legal arena and in everyday life. These men suggest that feminism has created a new kind of sexism by privileging women or by attempting to erase differences altogether. The **pro-feminist men's movement**, on the other hand, is based on the belief that men should support feminism in the interest of fairness to women and because men's lives are also constrained by gender and sexism—and are enriched by feminist social change. Pro-feminists suggest that the idea that men are superior is a burden and that, in the long term, men will be happier if society becomes less sexist. They argue that men need to share more of the responsibilities of child care, contest economic discrimination and violence against women, and generally respect women's lives. They make it clear that they also are working to end the oppression of gays and lesbians and all who suffer because of race, religion, or class.

Two Marches

The 1990s brought two men's marches to Washington, D.C. The first was the 1995 Million Man March for black male solidarity; it was followed in 1997 by a march by the Promise Keepers, a group that explicitly opposes feminism and advocates Christian fundamentalist values.

Before 1995, African American men had been underrepresented in men's movements and had tended to organize and protest with black women. Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and former head of the NAACP Benjamin Chavis Jr. conceived of the Million Man March as a way for black men to come together to project a positive image and demand change. On October 16, 1995, an estimated 837,000 African American men marched on the nation's capital, where speakers pointed out that black men are more likely to be unemployed, imprisoned, and victims of homicide than men of other races (Spike Lee's movie *Get on the Bus* is about the

Million Man March). They cited the long racist history of the United States and the persistent negative stereotypes of black men as violent and irresponsible, calling for an end to racism and an increase in black men's responsibility to their families and communities.

The Promise Keepers was founded by former University of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney in 1990 under the belief that one of the biggest problems in society is that traditional gender roles have been altered. This movement advocates a return to the days when the male was the head of the household, and it is widely considered a backlash against feminism and gay liberation. However, it also claims that far too many men have failed in their duties as husbands and fathers and that the typical man is emotionally distant and selfish. At Promise Keepers gatherings, at which women are not allowed, members make public commitments to God, family, and one another to be more responsible and to stop engaging in behaviors such as adultery and domestic abuse. In 1995, 600,000 Promise Keepers filled arenas and stadiums throughout the United States.

Women and men have always worked for causes they felt would advance their political interests—separately and/or collectively. In three different waves, American feminism has transformed itself to address women's issues in a changing society and to become more inclusive. Men's movements have both supported and opposed feminist goals. While the needs of these gender-based political and social movements will undoubtedly change in the future, what is certain is that women and men will always work—together and separately—to change their society in ways they feel are right.

sexual orientation the inclination to feel sexual desire toward people of a particular gender or toward both genders

homosexuality the tendency to feel sexual desire toward members of one's own gender

What Does It Mean to Be a Man? To counter the confusion that many men have about what it means to be a "real man," a men's movement has emerged. Its activities have included Wildman Gatherings inspired by Robert Bly's book *Iron John* and the Million Man March in 1995, which was the topic of Spike Lee's 1996 film *Get on the Bus.*

Sexual Orientation

Where does our sexual identity originate? Is **sexual orientation**—the inclination to be heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual—inherited, or is it a result of cultural or environmental factors? This question has long been debated. In the late 1800s, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a German lawyer who was perhaps the first gay activist, contended that sexuality was linked to gender and that gender was a product of hereditary factors, probably related to hormones (Ulrichs 1994). This line of thinking has persisted, but it was only with the arrival of genetic research in the 1990s that it gained added awareness. Is there in fact a "gay gene," or is homosexuality the product of socialization?

One of the first studies to gain widespread attention was conducted in the early 1990s by J.M. Bailey and R.C. Pillard, researchers who hypothesized that **homosexuality**, or sexual attraction to members of the same sex, was at least in part congenital, or present at birth (1991). They tested this hypothesis by examining the sexual orientation of different sets of twins, and their results suggested that they were right. Bailey and Pillard found that 52 percent of the identical twins of homosexual men were also homosexual and that 48 percent of the identical twins of lesbian women were also lesbian. Another study, conducted in 1992 by Allen and Gorski, found that a segment of the fibers connecting the hemispheres of the brain was up to one-third larger in homosexual men, again suggesting a biological basis.

One of the most consequential studies was done by neurobiologist Simon LeVay, who performed autopsies on men who had died of AIDS. LeVay examined the anterior

civil unions proposed as an alternative to gay marriage; a form of legally recognized commitment that provides gay couples some of the benefits and protections of marriage

hypothalamus, a part of the brain long thought to relate to sexual behavior, and discovered that gay men have a smaller hypothalamus than heterosexual men. The hypothalamus of the gay men he studied was actually closer in size to that of heterosexual women, and LeVay thought this was possibly due to prenatal differences in hormone levels (1991, 1993). In another widely publicized study, Dean Hamer examined a specific strand of DNA and the X chromosome in order to determine whether homosexual men shared a similar genetic trait and concluded that there was a possibility that homosexuality is genetic through the paternal side (Hamer et al. 1993).

Despite the considerable evidence pointing to a genetic origin of homosexuality, some believe that scientists, the media, and gay activists have overestimated its significance. One problem with the studies is that they may neglect the fact that genes interact in complicated ways—the same gene, or combination of genes, may produce different results in different environments. In other words, possessing a particular gene doesn't guarantee that a person will have a particular sexual orientation. Along these same lines, sociologists have criticized the idea of a gay gene for its narrow understanding of sexual orientation. For instance, it doesn't explain bisexuality or how biology and social environments interact to produce various sexual behaviors.



Civil Unions Legal recognition of same-sex couples' committed relationships grants them many of the benefits that are given to married heterosexual couples, such as insurance and Social Security benefits, the right to make medical decisions for one's partner, and federal income tax breaks.

It may be some time before science can resolve these issues, but it's easy to see what's at stake in favoring one side over the other. Gays and lesbians have embraced the genetic model because it is seen as a weapon in the fight for gay rights. After all, if sexual orientation is something a person is born with, then discrimination based on sexual orientation is as unacceptable as discrimination based on gender, race, or disability. The biological view also offers a way to bypass some of the moral and religious debates about homosexuality. In addition, straight Americans often become more tolerant when they assume that sexual orientation is something people are born with rather than a lifestyle choice.

Whatever the explanation for sexual orientation, many still believe that homosexuals should not be granted the same legal rights as heterosexuals. In the 2004 national election, 11 states passed initiatives outlawing same-sex marriage, and the issue has continued to appear over the years on other state ballots. The George W. Bush administration supported an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would define marriage solely as "a union between a man and a woman" and would prevent individual states, such as Vermont or Hawaii, from recognizing same-sex marriages. Polls seem to indicate that while most Americans oppose gay marriage, they are against such a constitutional amendment. Many say they would support **civil unions** for gay couples, which would entitle them to some of the same benefits enjoyed by heterosexual couples: insurance, Social Security benefits, the ability to make medical decisions for one's partner, and federal income tax breaks.

A Sexual Continuum?

As early as the late 1940s, the pioneering sex researcher Alfred Kinsey was suggesting that human sexuality was far more diverse than was commonly assumed. His own studies led him to believe that people were not exclusively heterosexual or homosexual but could fall along a wide spectrum (Kinsey et al. 1948, 1953). Kinsey and his associates developed a scale to measure this spectrum based on the degree of sexual responsiveness people had to members of the same and opposite sex. They took into account not only measurements but also an individual's fantasies, dreams, and feelings and the frequency of particular sexual activities. Kinsey and others who have followed him have suggested that we can best understand sexual orientation not through simplistic categories but rather as a fluid continuum that can change over the course of a person's lifetime.

KINSEY SCALE OF SEXUALITY

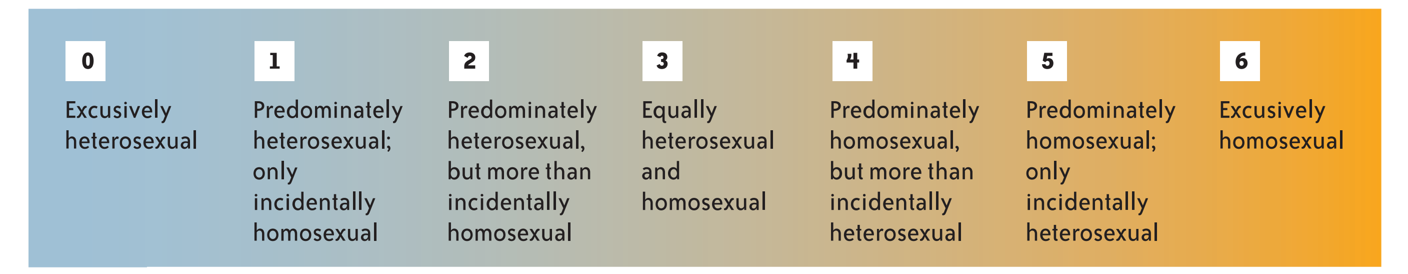


FIGURE 10.4 The Kinsey Scale The Kinsey Scale shows the spectrum of human sexuality.

More recently, researchers have argued that Kinsey's theory reduces orientations such as bisexuality and asexuality to a point on a single continuum. Thus, **bisexuals**, who are sexually attracted to both men and women, have had a hard time achieving recognition for their sexuality; often they are accused of being either timid homosexuals or adventurous heterosexuals. And those who are **asexual** may simply reject any sexual identity at all. Those who are associated with such sexualities deny that their orientation can be reduced to such a model.

For most of the twentieth century, *queer* was a pejorative term for homosexuals, mainly gay men. But in the 1990s, with the emergence of "queer theory," the term underwent a remarkable transformation as both activists and academics began using it. Why did this change occur? For one thing, the term includes many different sexualities and is thus more manageable. **Queer theory** rejects the idea of a single gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender identity, emphasizing instead the importance of difference (Butler 1993). It asserts that being queer is about "possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances" (Sedgwick 1993, p. 8). Thus, queer theory goes against the arguments made by mainstream gay rights advocates who focus on the biological basis of homosexuality and the equal treatment of homosexuals; it holds that innate, inborn sexual identity is too limiting. In this spirit, "queers" are sometimes called a "third sex," emphasizing the claim that people don't have to be restricted to either heterosexuality or homosexuality.

Homophobia

In 1968, police raided a gay bar in New York City called the Stonewall Inn. At the time, patrons of gay bars were frequently singled out for harassment from the police. The pent-up resentment and frustration this caused erupted into violence during the raid. The Stonewall riots began a new era of campaigning for civil rights for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals. Although many homosexuals still remain "in the closet," not revealing their sexual orientation even to friends or family members, others are open and vocal: "We're here, we're queer, get used to it!" goes one motto. Sociologist Dana Rosenfeld, who studies gay and lesbian identity, asserts that there are at least two distinct cohorts, those who lived before the gay liberation movement of the 1960s and those who lived during and after it. The earlier generation would have felt discredited if their sexual orientation had become public knowledge, whereas the later generation believed that making their orientation public was celebrating an essential aspect of the self that should not be denied (Rosenfeld 2003).

One reason homosexuals hide their identity is the extent of **homophobia**, "the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals," in society (Weinberg 1972). A sociological perspective on homophobia shifts the burden from gays and lesbians to those who have a negative reaction to them. In other words, instead of asking why homosexuals act the way they do, sociologists ask why people have a problem with homosexuality.

Some have pointed out that homophobia is not a true *phobia*, like agoraphobia or claustrophobia, which are psychological phenomena. Rather, it is a prejudice, like racism or anti-Semitism, which are cultural norms that are learned and transmitted

bisexuals individuals who are sexually attracted to both genders

asexual person who has no interest in or desire for sex

queer theory social theory about gender identity and sexuality that emphasizes the importance of difference and rejects as restrictive the idea of innate sexual identity

homophobia fear of or discrimination toward homosexuals or toward individuals who display purportedly gender-inappropriate behavior



"At-Risk" Youth and INSIGHTS Academy

Despite certain gains toward wider acceptance, homosexuals are still viewed by some as "deviants." They are often treated with fear and hostility, not only by the general public but also by their own family and friends. These reactions, whether expressed openly or thinly concealed, can create a host of negative self-perceptions as well as other real problems.

For many gays and lesbians, the most difficult period in dealing with their homosexual identity occurs during their adolescent years. Research shows that gay, bisexual, lesbian, and transgendered (GBLT) youth suffer disproportionately high rates of substance abuse, sexual abuse, suicide, and other risk-taking behavior as well as rejection from parents and peers. It is therefore not surprising to find that GBLT youth are also at greater risk for academic failure. The high school years can be challenging for any young person, but this is especially true for those with a hidden ("closeted") or open GBLT identity. They are often ridiculed and ostracized by their peers. They may suffer from loneliness and feelings of inadequacy or even be in fear for their personal safety. GBLT youth are five times as likely to miss school because of such concerns. Studies show that they are frequently the victims of harassment, verbal abuse, threats, and sometimes physical violence (Sessions Stepp 2001).

Adults in the school system may be unaware of the special problems these students face or unwilling to respond to them. Some may even be openly homophobic themselves. Most school curricula are also resolutely heterosexist, and too few schools have any support system, either social or academic, to help GBLT students cope. These students can be considered "at-risk" and therefore more likely to perform poorly or to drop out of school altogether.

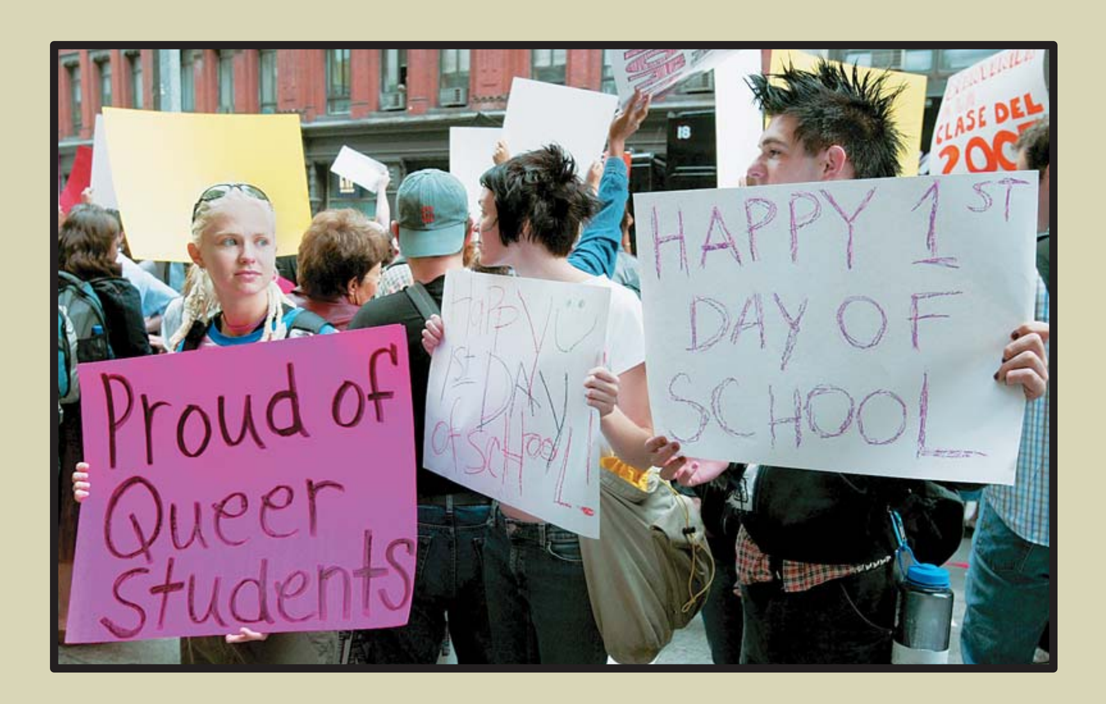
Fortunately, in recent years, school campuses have been exhibiting greater awareness of and support for GBLT students. In Dallas, New York, and Los Angeles, alternative or continuation high schools have been established to meet the needs of this select population, run by faculty and administrators who have an intimate understanding of what it means to be a GBLT youth. One such place is the INSIGHTS (Inspiring Noble Strength in Gay Hearts and Transgendered Souls) Academy in Los Angeles.

The INSIGHTS Academy (formerly called EAGLES Academy) was established in 1992 amid much controversy to serve GBLT students in the wider Southern California area who had been otherwise unable to succeed in public schools. The academy has not only helped "at-risk" students finish high school but also provided them with a range of other support services, from psychological counseling to housing options, health care, and job training. Many students have flourished for the first time in an environment where they felt safe, understood, and accepted, where they could find positive role models in their teachers and empathetic peers in their classmates. The staff and faculty of the school, and their community partners, believe strongly in the necessity for such an establishment. But despite its success, the INSIGHTS Academy continues to face political opposition and has had to fight for funding to stay open.

socially. Homophobia as a concept is problematic because it suggests that the problems faced by gays and lesbians are the result of a few maladjusted individuals rather than the product of deeply institutionalized cultural values and norms (Kitzinger 1987). Indeed, some have suggested that "heterosexism" would be a more useful term in that it is analogous to sexism and racism and describes an ideological system that stigmatizes any nonheterosexual behavior (Herek 1990; Rothblum 1996).

The Mass Media and Homosexual Stereotypes

As with other prejudices, there are both institutional and individual forms of homophobia. Individual homophobia is expressed through derogatory comments, discriminatory actions, and physical attacks. It is sometimes legitimated by institutional homophobia, which occurs when a government, business, church, or other organization discriminates



Those of you who enter occupations in teaching, counseling, social work, or health care may be in a position to identify and support GBLT youth. In the classroom, you have the power to create a safe, unprejudiced environment and to teach your students that difference and diversity are positive rather than negative values. As a counselor in a clinical setting, you have the opportunity to intervene in the lives of troubled individuals, to help them accept themselves as they are and make plans for a bright future. In health care settings, you will be trained to be alert to the special physical and psychological needs of GBLT youth. And in any job, you should hold your fellow employees to nondiscriminatory, gay-friendly standards in both official policy and informal office relations. A sociological perspective will help you stand up for GBLT youth and adults, which can include yourself, your students, patients, and coworkers, friends and family members, and even your own kids.

against people on the basis of sexual orientation. One social institution that has played a particularly interesting role in creating and sometimes challenging homosexual stereotypes is the mass media. While homosexuality is more visible now than it has ever been, many people still have no firsthand knowledge of homosexuality and turn to the media as their exclusive source for understanding it.

Before the 1960s, homosexuality was altogether absent from television. When it did appear, it was usually treated in a negative manner: in the 1967 CBS documentary *The Homosexuals*, one psychiatrist claims that "the fact that somebody's homosexual . . . automatically rules out the possibility that he will remain happy for long." In recent years, however, increasing levels of tolerance toward homosexuality have been reflected in increasingly positive representations of gays and lesbians on television, although these gains have not been without controversy. In 1997 the ABC sitcom *Ellen* introduced the first lesbian lead character in a prime-time



Changing the World

ACT-UP and AIDS Activism

ACT-UP stands for AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, a worldwide social movement whose motto is "Silence = Death." Since 1987, ACT-UP has used demonstrations to noisily challenge doctors, researchers, and politicians to address the AIDS crisis. Members seek funding for AIDS research and affordable drug treatments in the United States and abroad, and the commitment of powerful policy makers to fight the disease. ACT-UP originated at Manhattan's Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, but its membership now includes thousands of committed activists worldwide.

At ACT-UP demonstrations called "die-ins," thousands of protesters lie down on the steps of government buildings or drug company headquarters in order to illustrate the real outcome of ineffective AIDS policies and corporate greed. Members have scattered the ashes of AIDS victims on the White House lawn and delivered condoms to prison officials. ACT-UP activists have also used clever, well-designed stickers such as "Condoms, not coffins. AIDS won't wait!" to get their message across, plastering them on all available surfaces. Their marches and demonstrations sometimes feature the ceaseless, deafening blast of dog whistles, guaranteed to get the attention of passersby.

ACT-UP has played a role in reversing the discriminatory health-insurance practices of certain employers; pressuring the Centers for Disease Control to include illnesses suffered by women, children, and people of color in its definition of AIDS; increasing government funding for AIDS research; lowering prices of generic AIDS drugs in Africa; raising awareness about the spread of AIDS in prisons; protecting clean-needle programs for intravenous drug users; and encouraging celebrities like comedian Eddie Murphy to apologize publicly for making jokes about people with AIDS.

Over the last two decades, ACT-UP has had an important impact on other social movements. Animal rights activists, antiwar protesters, opponents of globalization, and environmentalists have all tailored ACT-UP "direct-action" strategies (such as "die-ins" and scattering ashes) to their own particular movements. ACT-UP has even developed an offshoot program that provides civil-disobedience training for demonstrators. During the Persian Gulf War of 1991, for instance, Dr. Ferris was part of a group of student protesters who learned "how to get arrested" from an ACT-UP volunteer; his advice included pointers on how to cross your wrists properly while being handcuffed, in order to avoid pain.

ACT-UP is an example of a social movement that started in a small way, in a local gay and lesbian community, but has now achieved worldwide recognition. It knows how to make itself heard, and in so doing it has helped to change the world.

series; two years later, the NBC sitcom *Will & Grace* featured two gay male characters. Other shows followed, with a variety of minor gay and lesbian characters: *Dawson's Creek*, *Party of Five*, *NYPD Blue*, *Spin City*, *Friends*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and later *Grey's Anatomy*, *Brothers & Sisters*, and *Ugly Betty*. Cable networks also developed gay- and lesbian-themed shows such as *Queer as Folk*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, and *The L Word*.

Just because homosexual characters are included on television, however, doesn't mean that homosexuals have achieved equal status. Clearly there is not the same kind of acceptance of homosexual relations as of heterosexual relations, as evidenced by how romantic couples are treated on TV. Until 2000, there had never been a gay male kiss on a network program (although there had been two lesbian kisses). This issue was brought up in an episode of *Will & Grace* called "Acting Out," which featured a clever show-within-a-show format. Will and his best friend, Jack, both gay, are watching their favorite TV show, also about gay characters, which is supposed to feature the first prime-time gay kiss ever. However, right before the much-anticipated kiss the cameras cut away and instead focus on the fireplace, a mere metaphor. Jack is upset but has trouble convincing Will that the incident really matters:

> Jack: I am outraged by this. Why aren't you?
> Will: Because I'm realistic. Clearly, nobody wants to see two men kissing on television, not the network, not the viewers, not the advertisers . . .
> Jack: That's right, Will. They wanna pretend we're invisible.



"Acting Out" In 2000, the comedy *Will & Grace* featured the first gay kiss on network television.

Later a group of gays, including Will and Jack, gather outside the NBC studios to protest. There, the *Today Show* meteorologist, Al Roker, is giving the weather report in front of the usual early-morning crowd of fans. Jack calls out to him, and as the camera focuses on Jack, he grabs Will and kisses him, on live TV. And there it is, finally, the first-ever gay kiss on network television. However, the fact that this is done in a humorous and backhanded way may actually undermine to some extent the political message the writers of the show were trying to convey.

What we can say as social scientists is that the more personal contact between members of different social groups, the less prejudice and discrimination between them. If the mass media provide some people's only exposure to gays and lesbians, then it is all the more important that their portrayals represent those communities in realistic ways.

Closing Comments

Sex, gender, and sexual orientation are status categories that structure social inequality and shape individual identities. They are different but interrelated, and we all experience their overlap in our everyday lives: we categorize ourselves and others and make assumptions about one another based on these perceived categories. A sociological perspective allows us to see the cultural and environmental influences on what may be considered biologically based identities and lets us identify and critique the stratification systems that have resulted from these influences. Most important, a sociological perspective allows us to see how destructive sexism is for men and women and how crippling homophobia can be for the straight majority as well as the gay minority. Stereotypes are socially constructed: they can therefore be socially deconstructed and socially reconstructed as well.



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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **What Is Sex? What Is Gender?** While the terms *sex* and *gender* are often used interchangeably, they are sociologically distinct concepts. *Sex* refers to biological differences, while *gender* refers to social and cultural categories that reflect the behaviors and traits that a particular social group considers appropriate for males and for females. In the past it was assumed that humans were sexually dimorphic and that gender was a result of innate biological differences, but the existence of intersexed individuals challenges the idea that sex is composed of two distinct categories.
- **Essentialist and Constructionist Perspectives on Gender** Essentialists believe that sex and gender are innate and that gender is an immutable biological fact in which each individual is either male or female and membership in one of these groups determines the rest of his or her identity. Few sociologists accept this. Instead, this chapter has taken a constructionist perspective, arguing that gender should be understood as a social construction and that a dichotomous, two-gender system is just one way of classifying individuals.
- **Gender Inequality** There are a number of sociological theories to explain gender inequality. Functionalist theory argues that gender roles exist because they are an efficient form of social organization, allocating instrumental

roles to men and expressive roles to women. However, this fails to explain why society rewards these roles so unequally. Conflict theorists see gender roles as resulting from male dominance: Because men have historically had greater access to material resources, it is in their interest to preserve their dominant status. Unlike macro-theories, symbolic interactionists emphasize *how* gender is socially constructed, maintained, and reproduced every day. One way to examine this process is through studies of transsexuals undergoing the process of sex reassignment. Such individuals must learn to "do gender" in new ways to fit a new identity. Although this might seem like an unusual concern, we all learn to do gender throughout our lives.

- **Gender Role Socialization** Gender role socialization occurs primarily through the four major agents of socialization: family, schools, peers, and mass media. Though we don't always recognize their influences, all four of these agents of socialization constantly teach us which actions and behaviors are gender appropriate, both through direct sanctions for "inappropriate" behavior and by providing models of "appropriate" gender roles.
- **Sex, Gender, and Life Chances** Sex and gender affect almost every significant life outcome. Gender expectations shape experiences with family life, health, the educational system, and the workplace. Women tend to be disadvantaged in institutional settings in our society, doing a disproportionate amount of housework, earning less on average than their male peers in the workplace, and remaining more likely to live in poverty. In language, we can see evidence of the cultural norms and values that underwrite such inequalities. Our vocabulary tends to reflect a hierarchal system of gender inequality, with male-associated words referring to power and authority as well as representing the default category for all humans. Language can also reflect social change, as many people now strive to use gender-neutral terms and reform sexist language. However, it is still up for debate whether these changes *reflect* changes in society or if changes in linguistic convention can *create* change.
- **The Women's Movement and the Men's Movement** Feminism has always represented both a theory and the groups who attempted to implement that theory. The women's movement is usually divided into three historical stages or waves, each of which is characterized by the particular feminist concerns it emphasized. The men's movement, though more recent, mirrors the women's movement in its concern with the nature of gender roles and a desire to reform masculinity. Although originally broadly sympathetic with feminism, the men's movement has now split into the men's rights movement and the pro-feminist men's movement. The former group feels that feminism creates disadvantages for men; the latter feels that sexism harms both men and women and wants to fundamentally change society's ideas about gender.
- **Sexual Orientation and Homophobia** Much like questions about gender, the debate over sexual orientation centers on the nature-vs.-nurture debate. Although some evidence supports a biological component to homosexuality, research in this area is still preliminary, and some scientists question the methods used in such studies. Many Americans, both gay and straight, have embraced the idea that homosexuality is genetic, based on the idea that if sexuality is innate then sexuality-based discrimination is unacceptable. However, adherents to queer theory reject the genetic model as unduly limiting the diversity of possible identities. Despite a great deal of change in recent years, homophobia is still common in American society. Some would even argue that the term *homophobia* represents a biased attitude, as the term *phobia* implies a psychological condition, thus excusing intolerance.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Are women and men truly "opposite" sexes? What assumptions are involved in talking about male and female as opposites? Do you think that sex and gender are each composed of two discrete categories? Why or why not?
2. This chapter uses a constructionist approach to explain gender inequality. Can you imagine any behaviors or activities that you think could be better explained from an essentialist point of view? Which approach makes more sense to you? What sort of data or test could help you determine if a particular behavior or activity is innate?
3. How are berdaches and hijras different from the cross-dressers or transsexuals in our society? Given that this chapter is primarily about the sociology of gender in the United States, why are we interested in these cross-cultural examples? What can they tell us about our own society?
4. Our society upholds expectations about which gender more appropriately fills the instrumental and the

expressive roles. In your family, were the nurturing and emotional support primarily provided by women? How do these gendered expectations reinforce the traditional family structure? How do they perpetuate gender inequality?

5. From an interactional perspective, gender is not an internal essence, but something we achieve through interaction. This implies that throughout everyday life we are "doing gender." Picture the gendered differences in behaviors like sitting, walking, or conversing. Can you think of a time when you did gender "wrong" and other people reacted negatively? Why did they react this way?
6. Consider the ways you were socialized by your family. In what ways was your socialization gendered? What toys did you play with as a child? What extracurricular activities were you encouraged to pursue? What household chores did you perform?
7. The second shift refers to the housework that must be done after the day's paid labor is complete; women do a disproportionate amount of this work. Why do you think this is? What types of tasks does our society expect women to do? How do the tasks expected of men differ?
8. Do you believe that there is a "gay gene"? Why do you think so many people have strong opinions on the possibility of a genetic component of sexual orientation, even though research in this area is just beginning? What is at stake in this debate?
9. Television has played an important role in perpetuating stereotypes about homosexuals. For years, portrayals of gays and lesbians on television were quite rare—and typically negative. In recent years this has started to change, with more shows offering positive representations of homosexual characters. How have such changes affected social attitudes about gays and lesbians?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

The Aggressives. 2005. Dir. Daniel Peddle. Image Entertainment. A documentary that follows women who feel more comfortable dressing and acting as men. The film documents the women's efforts at passing—even those who interact with them closely don't always know they are women—and as the name suggests, this involves changes in demeanor as much as in clothing and hair cuts.

Amnesty International's *Stop Violence Against Women* campaign (web.amnesty.org/actforwomen/index-eng). This site provides information and resources to help fight violence against women around the world.

Bly, Robert. 2004. *Iron John*. Cambridge, MA: DaCapo Press. A touchstone of the branch of the men's movement that remains allied with feminist goals. Bly argues that men need to find ways to become more introspective about aggression and responsibility.

Butler, Judith. 2000. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 10th ed. New York: Routledge. A demanding read and one of the most influential studies of the social and political origins of the sex/gender system.

Eugenides, Jeffrey. 2003. *MiddleSex*. New York: Picador. A novel about Cal Stephanides, born Calliope Stephanides, who discovers at age 14 that genetically and chromosomally—even if not anatomically—he is male. The novel incorporates fantastical elements to explore issues surrounding the scientific study and the lived experience of gender.

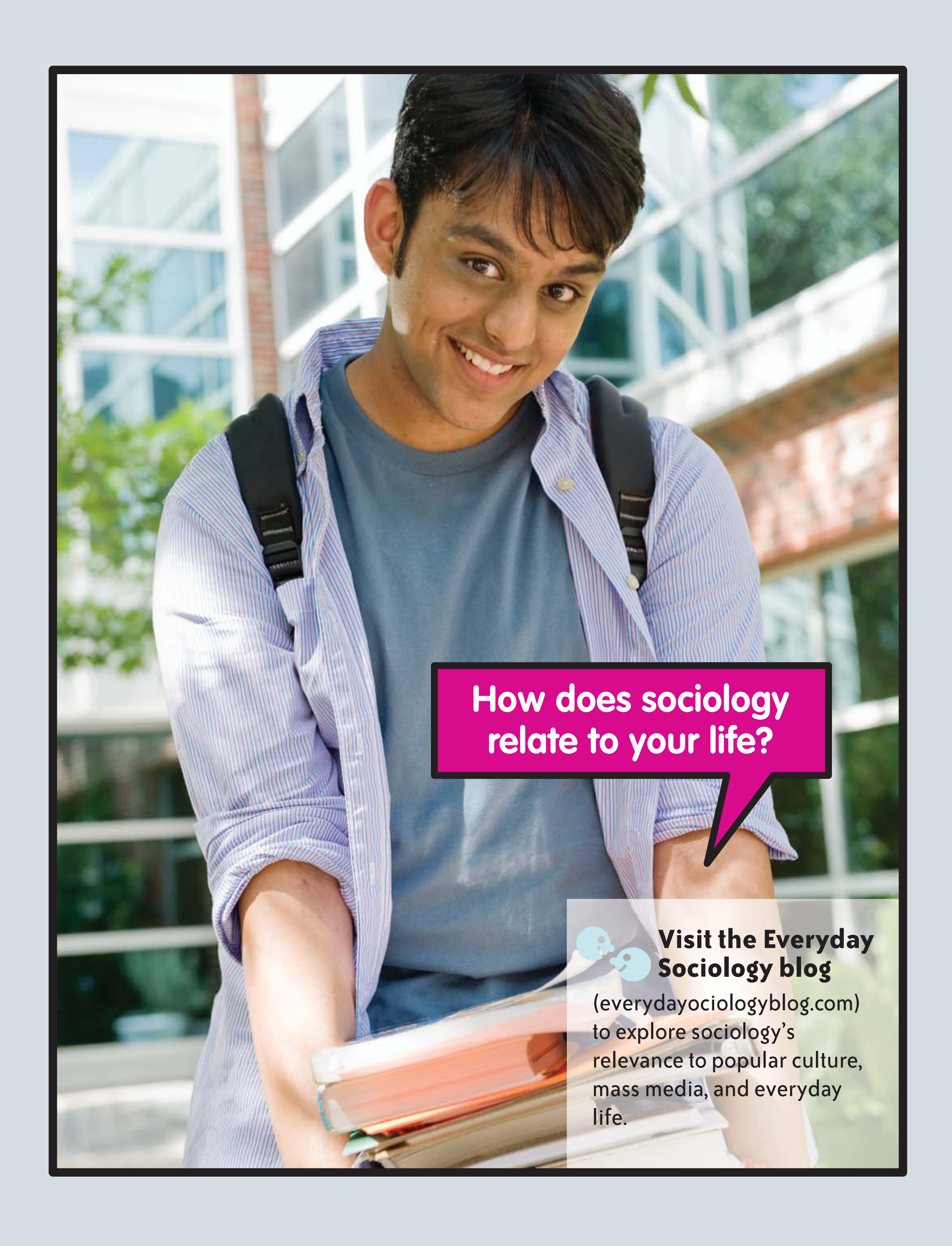
Naylor, Gloria. 1985. *The Women of Brewster Place*. New York: Penguin. This novel follows a group of seven African American women living in the same apartment building who must rely on each other to survive in a world where they are disadvantaged by their race, class, and gender.

Paragraph 175. 2000. Dir. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. Telling Pictures. A documentary about the persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany, named after the section of the German penal code that criminalized homosexuality. This law, written long before the Nazis came to power, stayed on the books until 1973.

Sedgewick, Eve Kosofsky. 1991. *The Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press. This highly influential work of queer theory closely examines the ways that our categories for sexual identities shape contemporary society.

Russo, Vito. 1987. *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. New York: HarperCollins. Like the 1995 documentary of the same name, this book offers a sharp, insightful analysis of the ways that institutional homophobia has played out in the movies, in everything from *Spartacus* to *Philadelphia*.

Trembling Before G-d. 2001. Dir. Sandi Simcha Dubowski. New Yorker Films. This film documents the lives of gays and lesbians in the Orthodox Jewish community, paying close attention to the tensions that result from the strict prohibition of homosexuality within Orthodox Judaism.


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PART IV Examining Social Institutions as Sites of Everyday Life



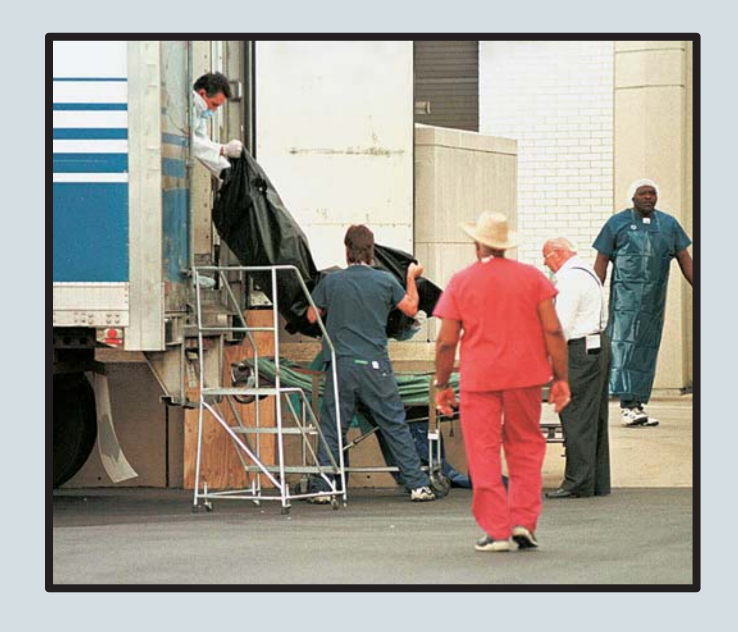
Our everyday lives take place within the contexts of many overlapping and interdependent social institutions. A social institution is a collection of patterned social practices that are repeated continuously and regularly over time and supported by social norms. Politics, the economy, family, religion, and education are all social institutions, and you have contact with many of these (and others) on a daily basis. The patterns and structures of social institutions shape your individual experiences; at the same time, it's important to remember that social institutions are created, maintained, and changed by individual actions.

In the next four chapters, we will look at specific social institutions, such as politics, education, and religion (Chapter 11), the economy (Chapter 12), the family (Chapter 13), and recreation and leisure (Chapter 14), and their role in structuring your everyday life. You will be introduced to a variety of sociological research that focuses on how these social institutions and others work; here, we highlight a sociological researcher whose work integrates many of them. In his book *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago* (2002), Eric Klinenberg examines the circumstances surrounding Chicago's catastrophic heat wave in 1995, which killed over 700 people. Klinenberg analyzes the week-long heat wave as more than a meteorological phenomenon. People died, he argues, because of a combination of disturbing demographic trends and dangerous institutional policies present at all times in all major urban areas.

For one week in mid-July of 1995, the city of Chicago suffered the worst heat wave in its history: Temperatures exceeded 100 degrees for four days in a row, and heat indices (the "real feel" air temperature) hit a high of 126 degrees. Historic buildings baked like ovens, but fear of crime left many people feeling trapped inside their apartments. Children passed out in overheated school buses. City residents blasted their air conditioning (if they had it), mobbed the tiny beaches on Lake Michigan, and broke open fire hydrants to stay cool. As a result, power outages peppered the area and water pressure dropped dangerously. Roads buckled, train tracks warped, and people suffered from heat-related illnesses in large numbers. The city's 911 emergency system overloaded, and some callers waited two hours for ambulances to arrive; more than 20 hospitals closed their emergency rooms, overwhelmed with patients. The death toll mounted, with the elderly and the poor especially vulnerable. In this single week, 739 Chicagoans died as a result of the heat. According to Klinenberg, the individual "isolation, deprivation, and vulnerability" that led to these deaths resulted from a variety of institutional structures, including poverty, racial segregation, family dislocation, and city politics. These institutional arrangements must be examined and changed in order to avoid future tragedies.



Many of those who died during the heat wave were elderly people who lived alone: sick or fragile, their mobility compromised, their neighborhoods changing around them, their families far away or neglectful, and their social networks dissolving. In many cases, the elderly victims of the heat wave were so isolated that no one ever claimed their bodies (p. 15). The story of Pauline Jankowitz, 85, who survived the heat wave, illustrates these demographic trends (pp. 50–54). Pauline lives alone on the third floor of an apartment building with no elevator. She suffers from incontinence and walks with a crutch. She recognizes her vulnerability, and leaves her apartment only once every two months. Her two children live in other states and rarely visit, so a volunteer from a charitable organization does Pauline's weekly grocery shopping. However, Pauline no longer has any connections with her immigrant neighbors and spends most of her time in her apartment listening to radio talk shows. Pauline's isolation is hardly unique. Her circumstances



illustrate the ways that the geographic mobility of the contemporary family, the changing populations of urban neighborhoods, the financial limitations of retirement incomes, and the lack of supportive social services all contribute to situations in which elderly individuals may live, face crises, and die alone.

Klinenberg argues that race and class inequality also contributed to the death toll in the Chicago heat wave. He shows that the death tolls were highest in the city's "black belt," a group of predominantly African American neighborhoods on the south and west sides of the city. (These neighborhoods also have relatively high levels of poverty and crime and relatively large populations of elderly residents.) Social ties in these neighborhoods are hard to maintain: Poverty contributes to residential transiency, so neighbors may not get to know one another before they must move to different housing elsewhere. Gang activity and crime make residents afraid to walk down the street or sit on their own front porches. And although some of the neighborhoods in question have powerful religious organizations in their midst, even the most proactive church needs significant financial resources to reach out to its members—and such resources may be hard to come by in poor neighborhoods. So, a person's risk of heat-related death during July of 1995 was partly place-based. In Chicago, as in most major cities, place, race, and class are closely connected.

In July 1995, Chicago's government services also failed in a number of ways when the city's residents needed them most. However, Klinenberg argues that the city's bureaucracies were no more ill-prepared to deal with catastrophe during that week than during any other. Long-term, macro-level changes in city politics mean that both the political will and the material resources to provide assistance to the poor were fatally absent. For example, overextended paramedics and firefighters had no centralized office with which to register their observations or complaints. As a result, many problems went unheeded by the city until emergency services were too swamped to provide timely assistance. There was little coordination between the local, state, and federal agencies that dealt with social welfare and emergency services. Finally, Klinenberg indicts city officials for "governing by public relations" (p. 143)—that is, for using the mass media to deflect attention from the city's problems, including minimizing both the scope of the heat wave and the city's accountability.

Klinenberg's "social autopsy" reveals the failure of social institutions on a massive scale—and the disturbing prospect that this disaster could happen again, anywhere, if we do not take steps to change flawed social systems. Structural and institutional arrangements—including city government, race- and class-based segregation, families, schools, religious organizations, and the media—must change in order to avoid individual tragedies. But individual actions help bring about institutional change, and *Heat Wave* reveals important ways in which all our fates intertwine, as they are shaped by the social institutions we encounter every day. How can we better manage this interdependence, for the good of all?





CHAPTER 11

The Macro-Micro Link in Social Institutions

Politics, Education, and Religion



ou probably know the Pledge of Allegiance by heart and have said it countless times in elementary and high school, but you may not have thought much about its words or why you were required to say them.

I pledge allegiance to the Flag
of the United States of America,
and to the Republic for which it stands:
one Nation, under God, indivisible,
with Liberty and Justice for all.

Reciting the pledge was just a routine part of being a student in the United States. Could it possibly be controversial? A lot of people think so. The Pledge of Allegiance brings together questions about three important social institutions in American life: politics, education, and religion, as you will see.

Dr. Michael Newdow, an emergency room physician and self-described atheist in California, is committed to preserving the separation of church and state. When his daughter's second-grade class began reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, Newdow became disturbed because it contained the phrase "one Nation, *under God*." Acting as his own attorney, Newdow filed a lawsuit, and in February 2003 the 9th Circuit Court held the pledge to be in violation of the Constitution because the reference to God violated the separation of church and state.

Many civic and political leaders—liberals as well as conservatives—denounced the decision. The Senate passed a resolution condemning it, and the attorney general announced that the Justice Department would "spare no effort to preserve the rights of all our citizens to pledge allegiance to the American flag" (H. Weinstein 2003). Almost universally lawmakers came out in defense of the pledge, agreeing with Judge Ferdinand Fernandez, who in his dissenting opinion argued that the phrase *under God* had "no tendency to establish a religion in this country or to suppress anyone's exercise, or non-exercise, of religion, except in the fevered eye of persons who most fervently would like to drive all tincture of religion out of the public life of our polity" (Egelko 2002). Ultimately, the case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which

SocIndex

Then and Now

1787: Number of political parties provided for in the U.S. Constitution: 0

2008: Number of U.S. political parties fielding or endorsing presidential candidates: 21

Here and There

United States: Christmas has been an official federal holiday since 1870

Cuba: The celebration of Christmas was banned by Fidel Castro until 1998, when it was officially reinstated

This and That

New York, 2006: Public schools' average annual per-pupil expenditure: $14,884

Utah, 2006: Public schools' average annual per-pupil expenditure: $5,427

overturned the lower court's ruling on a technicality but did not address whether the language in the pledge violates the First Amendment.

The Pledge of Allegiance was originally written in 1892 and did not contain the phrase *under God*; that was added in 1954, when President Eisenhower signed a bill making the change official. The added words generated no controversy at the time. The president declared that their addition would affirm "the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty" and Senator Joseph McCarthy "said it was a clear indication that the United States was committed to ending the threat of 'godless' Communism" (Brinkley-Rogers 2002).

Since as early as 1943 the Supreme Court has ruled that children cannot be forced to recite the pledge. In 1943, the issue addressed was the patriotic nature of the pledge. However, a 2002 ruling by Judge Alfred Goodwin states that reciting the pledge in public schools "places students in the untenable position of choosing between participating in an exercise with religious content or protesting," an especially damaging scenario because "the coercive effect of the policy here is particularly pronounced in the school setting, given the age and impressionability of schoolchildren" (H. Weinstein 2003). After all, how many second graders will be willing to stand out from their peers in so dramatic a fashion?

Although there is a great deal of disagreement over what should be done in this case, all the participants agree, even if only implicitly, that social institutions play an important role in the lives of Americans. **Social institutions** (systems and structures that organize our group life, such as school, religion, and the government) shape and constrain our everyday lives. For example, if school starts at 8:00 A.M. and ends at 3:00 P.M., this structures the life of an entire household—it dictates what time children should go to bed and get up in the morning; when breakfast and dinner are prepared, served, and eaten; and what types of arrangements must be made for transportation, after-school activities, and child care. In turn, these same institutions are created and sustained through our everyday interaction. For example, a school exists only because of the actions of the teachers, students, parents, and administrators who are part of the surrounding community.

Social institutions represent a bit of a sociological paradox. They function at the macro level to shape our everyday interactions, but at the micro level those same everyday interactions construct social institutions. Because they are at the center of both micro- and macrosociology, social institutions give us the opportunity to examine the connection between interaction and structure, between the individual and society. In this chapter, we will focus on the social institutions of religion, education, and government as places where the micro and the macro come together, and we will show how the intersections between social institutions shape everyday life.

social institutions systems and structures within society that shape the activities of groups and individuals

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

We have devoted entire chapters to other social institutions such as work and family, but here we have grouped politics, education, and religion together for a reason. These institutions intersect in distinctive and often unexamined ways in our everyday lives—the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance is just one example. Local and national controversies over school vouchers or sex education are other examples of the ways in which political, educational, and religious concerns overlap. Every day we make decisions or engage in debates that address moral values, political practicalities, and educational expectations all bundled together.

When you read this chapter, we want you to be able to see the relationships among these three social institutions as well as to make the connection between micro- and macrosociology. This is a key opportunity to use the sociological theories and methods you have learned in previous chapters to find the intersections between individual experience and social structure, and the overlaps between various social institutions in everyday life. After reading this chapter, you should have a deeper understanding of how social institutions shape your individual experience and how you as an individual contribute to shaping those institutions.

What Is Politics?

Politics has concerned social thinkers since at least the time of the philosophers in ancient Greece. The word *politics* comes from the Greek *politikos* meaning citizens, civic, civil, and political. As a sociological term, **politics** pertains especially to the methods and tactics of managing a political entity such as a nation or state, as well as the administration and control of its internal and external affairs. But it can also mean the attitudes and activities of groups and individuals. To understand the relationship between citizens and their particular political environment, we must first look at the variety of different political systems and study the American system of democracy. Then we will examine elections and voting, lobbies and special interest groups, and the role of the media in the political process.

Political Systems: Government

Government is the formal, organized agency that exercises power and control in modern society. Governments are vested with the power and authority to make laws and enforce them. As you probably remember from Chapter 2, Weber defined **power** as the ability to get others to do one's bidding. When sociologists talk about **authority**, they refer to the legitimate, noncoercive exercise of power. Throughout the world and throughout history, governments have taken a variety of forms. When evaluating types of governance as sociologists, we ask certain questions about the relationship between leaders and followers: who has power and who does not, what kind of power is exerted, and how far does that power extend?

TOTAL POWER AND AUTHORITY **Authoritarianism** is a political system that denies ordinary citizens representation by and control over their own government. Thus, citizens have no say in who rules them, what laws are made, and how those laws are enforced. Generally, political power is concentrated in the hands of a few elites who control military and economic resources. A *dictatorship* is one form of authoritarian system. In most instances, a dictator does not gain power by being elected or through succession but seizes power and becomes an absolutist ruler. Dictators may gain control through a military coup, as occurred when General Augusto Pinochet came to power in Chile in 1973. In other cases, leaders may be legally elected or appointed but then become dictators once in power, abolishing any constitutional limits on their authority—such as President Charles Taylor of Liberia, who was deposed in 2003 and is currently facing international war crime charges in The Hague. Dictators are most often individuals but can also be associated with political parties or groups such as the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Totalitarianism is the most extreme and modern version of authoritarianism. The government seeks to control every aspect, public and private, of citizens' lives. Unlike older forms of authoritarianism, a totalitarian government can utilize all the contrivances of surveillance technology, systems of mass communication, and modern weapons to control its citizens (Arendt 1958). Totalitarian governments are usually headed by a dictator, whether a ruler or a single political party. Through propaganda, totalitarian regimes can further control the population by disseminating ideology aimed at shaping their thoughts, values, and attitudes.

politics methods and tactics intended to influence government policy; policy-related attitudes, and activities

government the formal, organized agency that exercises power and control in modern society, especially through the creation and enforcement of laws

power the ability to impose one's will on others

authority the legitimate, noncoercive exercise of power

authoritarianism system of government by and for a small number of elites that does not include representation of ordinary citizens



Dictators Try to Control All Aspects of Citizens' Lives Leaders such as Kim Jong Il of North Korea, Augusto Pinochet of Chile, and Charles Taylor of Liberia led some of the world's most notorious dictatorships.

An example of a modern totalitarian ruler is Kim Jong Il of North Korea, whose nation has one of the worst human rights records in the world, restricts the basic freedoms of its people, and has a stagnant, internationally isolated economy.

MONARCHIES AND THE STATE Monarchies are governments ruled by a king or queen. In a **monarchy**, sovereignty is vested in a successive line of rulers, usually within a family, such as the Tudors of England, the Ming Dynasty of China, and the Romanovs of Russia. Nobility is handed down through family lines and can include numerous family members who hold royal titles. Monarchs are not popularly elected and not usually accountable to the general citizenry, and some may rule by "divine right," the idea that they are leaders chosen by God.

Monarchies can be divided into two categories: absolute and constitutional. Absolute monarchs typically have complete authority over their subjects, much like a dictator. Constitutional monarchs are royal figures whose powers are defined by a political charter and limited by a parliament or other governing body. Most monarchies were weakened, overthrown, or otherwise made obsolete during the many social revolutions of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries such as the French Revolution (1789) and the Russian Revolution (1917). In contemporary times, some Asian and European nations, such as Japan, Thailand, Great Britain, or Sweden, still enjoy their royal families as national figureheads and celebrities, though their kings, queens, princes, and princesses don't have any real power in these constitutional monarchies. There are, however, a few remaining modern examples of more absolute monarchies in the world, among them Saudi Arabia, Brunei, and Morocco.

monarchy a government ruled by a king or queen, with succession of rulers kept within the family

democracy a political system in which all citizens have the right to participate

CITIZENS AND DEMOCRACY Democracy originated in ancient Greece and represented a radical new political system. In a **democracy** citizens share in directing the activities of their government rather than being ruled by an autocratic individual or authoritarian group. The idea is that educated citizens should participate in the election of officials who then represent their interests in law making, law enforcement, resource allocation, and international affairs. Democracy is not only a political system but also a philosophy that emphasizes the right and capacity of individuals, acting either directly or through representatives, to control through majority rule the institutions that govern them. Democracy is also associated with the values of basic human rights, civil liberties, freedom, and equality.

Democracy may seem like the ideal system of government, but remember that not all citizens are equally represented even by a democratic government. In many democratic nations, women, ethnic or racial minorities, members of certain religions, and immigrants have been excluded from citizenship or from equal participation in the political process. In the United States, women did not have the right to vote until 1920. And while the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution technically gave adult males of all races voting rights in 1870, barriers such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and "grandfather clauses" kept African Americans from exercising those rights for almost 100 years, until the 1965 Voting Rights Act was passed. Native Americans were legally excluded from voting in federal elections until 1924, and residents of the District of Columbia were not allowed to vote for president until 1961. As you can see, even the

world's leading democracy has not always seen all citizens as equal.

The American Political System

When American colonists rebelled against British authority in 1776, they created the first modern democracy. American democracy, however, is much more complicated than "rule by the people." In the following sections, we focus on voting, theories about who governs, the power of interest groups, and the influence of the mass media on the political system.

VOTING IN THE UNITED STATES The American political system prides itself on being a democracy, a government that confers power to the people. In this form of government, power is formally exercised through the election process, which provides each person with a vote. Sociologists have long been interested in the social factors—such as age, education, religion, or ethnic background—that influence whether and how individuals vote.



Barack Obama Joined by his wife Michelle, Obama takes the oath of office to become the 44th president of the United States.

By the end of the twentieth century, many had become concerned about a steady, decades-long decline in American voter turnout. For example, in the 1960 presidential election, 63 percent of the electorate cast ballots, but by 1996, that number fell to below 50 percent for the first time since 1924.

Voter turnout began improving in the 2004 presidential election, but it is important to consider how voter turnout has been measured. Prior to the 2004 election, the voter turnout rate was typically calculated by dividing the total number of votes by the "voting-age population"—*everyone* aged 18 and older residing in the United States. This figure included people who were ineligible to vote—mainly noncitizens and felons—and excluded eligible overseas voters. Since the 2004 election, voting rates have been based on the "voting-eligible population," which changes the overall voting picture and challenges the notion of decline in voter turnout. In the 2004 election, voter turnout was 55 percent for the "voting-age population" and 60 percent for the "voting-eligible population." And among eligible voters under 25, turnout rose by almost 6 percent over the 2000 election, with some 10.5 million of them going to the polls.

Voter turnout improved again in the presidential election of 2008 in which Barack Obama, the first African American president, was elected. An estimated 61.4 percent of the voting-eligible population, or 130.9 million Americans, cast their ballots. That represents an increase of 1.3 percentage points over 2004 but falls short of the record turnout of 62.5 percent in 1968. Among young voters aged 18–29, the 2008 election represented the second highest turnout in history, with approximately 22–24 million, or 49–54 percent of eligible voters, casting their ballots. The record youth voter turnout belongs to the election in 1972, the first year that 18-year-olds had the right to vote.

Even so, why are voter participation rates so much lower in the United States than in some comparable democratic nations? Is it simply voter apathy or cynicism? A number of social factors affect the likelihood that someone will or will not vote. Age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, geographic location, social class, and education are all demographic variables that influence voter participation as well as how people vote. For example, Minnesota had the highest voter turnout of any state in the 2008 presidential election—almost 78 percent of its citizens voted, whereas only 51 percent of the eligible voters from Hawaii and 50 percent from Utah turned out. What explains this difference? Turnout may be affected by factors ranging from the number of other races on the ballot to the weather. Senior citizens are much more likely to vote than young adults—compare a 72 percent turnout for those over 55 with a 47 percent turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds. But the top reason people give for not voting, according to a 2004 survey, is that they are simply too busy (Holder 2006).

In some instances, however, people do not vote because they are **disenfranchised**—barred from voting. All states except Maine and Vermont disenfranchise convicted felons while they are incarcerated. Thirty-five states disenfranchise felons on parole, thirty-one do so for felons on probation, and seven others permanently disenfranchise them (Weedon 2004). Human rights groups have long protested this policy, arguing that it is not a legitimate function of the penal

disenfranchised stripped of voting rights, either temporarily or permanently

Changing the World

Patriotism and Protest

In the United States, the Constitution guarantees freedom of the press and freedom of speech. Anyone—an individual, a newspaper's editorial staff, a group, or an organization—can criticize the system, call for change, and openly express disapproval of the president, other leaders, and government policies. In some political systems, this kind of speech could get you censured, imprisoned, "disappeared," or even executed. For instance, during Argentina's "Dirty War" in the late 1970s and early 80s, the military dictatorship killed or "disappeared" about 10,000 to 30,000 citizens.

Even though freedom of speech is a legal right in the United States, when we criticize some policy or some action of the government, we may, ironically, be called unpatriotic by those who support it. This is especially true in times of war or national crisis, when many citizens believe we should pull together as a country and present a united front to the world. During the 1960s, for example, at the height of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, many Americans considered antiwar protesters "un-American" because of their vocal criticism of American intervention in Southeast Asia. After September 11, 2001, those who questioned the competence of U.S. intelligence agencies (such as journalists, elected representatives, and survivors of those killed in the attacks) were effectively silenced until more than a year later, when Congress impaneled a commission to investigate intelligence agencies' preparation for and response to the attacks. The commission's report confirmed problems within the intelligence community that contributed to the inability to foresee and forestall the attacks—corroborating the criticisms of "unpatriotic" protesters.

Numerous protests also occurred during the Iraq war, which began in 2003. For example, in 2003, the country music group The Dixie Chicks expressed their antiwar sentiments by saying that, as Texans, they were ashamed that President George W. Bush was also from their home state. This comment caused a storm of controversy, and many radio stations all over the country refused to play The Dixie Chicks' songs. The protests at the 2004 Democratic and Republican national conventions in Boston and New York City were notable for their size, their creativity, and the intense response they provoked from law enforcement. Both protesters and police used the internet and mobile phones to coordinate their actions, and in one demonstration 5,000 bicyclists clogged the streets of Manhattan for a protest ride. Using a different strategy, peace activist Cindy Sheehan, whose son was killed in Iraq, set up camp outside George W. Bush's Texas ranch in August 2005, vowing to stay there until the president came outside and spoke with her. He never did, and in July 2006 Sheehan purchased several acres of land near the Bush ranch to create a more permanent memorial to her son.

Is it unpatriotic to criticize your government or to call for change in times of national crisis? Those who do so argue that such criticism is the most patriotic act of all: that uncritical acceptance of government is not the same as patriotism and that citizens should make every effort to correct its flaws. Those on the opposite side may say, "My country, right or wrong" and believe that the decisions of our elected leaders, once made, are beyond criticism. Regardless of your views, keep in mind that those who criticize government policies are doing exactly what our democratic system calls for and protects. Dissent and its tolerance are crucial elements of an open society, and you have a constitutionally protected right to oppose, criticize, and protest. And to boycott The Dixie Chicks if you so choose!



The Constitution Protects Your Right to Boycott, Oppose, Criticize, and Protest
Top: Antiwar protesters and supporters of President Bush clash during demonstration outside a senior center where Bush was giving a speech. Left: Morgan Gardner of Bossier City, Louisiana, throws away a Dixie Chicks CD at a protest hosted by a local radio station. Right: Hundreds of thousands of people protested against President Bush and the Iraq War during the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York City.

TABLE 11.1 *Theory in Everyday Life*

Perspective	Approach to Social Institutions	Case Study: Understanding Political Power in America
STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM	Social institutions such as politics, education, and religion provide critical functions for the needs of society and help to maintain order and unity.	The theory of pluralism suggests that in a democracy, power is held in a variety of hands; each group is assumed to have equal access to power and can thus serve as a system of checks and balances.
CONFLICT THEORY	Social institutions such as politics, education, and religion represent the interests of those in power and thus create and maintain inequalities in society.	The theory of the power elite suggests that power in the United States is concentrated in the hands of a small group of decision makers and that the masses have little power in the democratic process.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Social institutions such as politics, education, and religion are created through individual participation; they give meaning to and are part of the everyday experience of members.	The theory of the social construction of presidential candidates suggests that the messages we receive from the media help to shape our perceptions and influence public opinion and voting behavior.

system. In addition, individuals may be mistakenly identified as former felons and improperly stricken from the rolls, which occurred in Florida in the 2000 presidential election (Hull 2002; Uggen and Manza 2002). Consequently, many eligible voters were turned away from the polls.

Another obstacle to potential voters lies with registration, which must be done well in advance of an election. In the United States, even individuals with the legal right to vote cannot do so unless they are registered. Recent legislation, such as the 2000 Motor-Voter Act, allows voters to register when renewing a driver's license and has made registration easier. Another problem for many working Americans is that elections are held on a Tuesday rather than a weekend or a national holiday (something done in other democratic countries).

Even when voters do appear at the polls there may be other troubles. During the 2000 presidential election, irregularities in ballots and vote counts in Florida delayed the state's ability to declare a winner for several weeks. In some of Florida's poor and minority districts, faulty voting equipment, poorly trained poll workers, and scarce resources kept almost 200,000 votes from being counted—votes that were likely predominantly Democratic. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) brought a voting discrimination suit against the state of Florida that was settled with a donation to the organization's efforts toward voter education and mobilization. Much media attention has focused on the invisible disenfranchisement of poor and minority voters, and some states have enacted more progressive laws to deal with these problems by providing greater access to the disabled, making absentee balloting easier, or keeping the polls open longer.

pluralist model a system of political power in which a wide variety of individuals and groups have equal access to resources and the mechanisms of power

This election controversy is an example of how structural issues (unequal state voting resources) can affect individual experience (the ability to make one's vote count) and how those individual experiences in turn affect the larger society (electing Bush rather than Gore).

Who Rules America?

Ideally, in a democracy, elected officials represent the interests of the people in doing the business of government. But how much do we really know about what legislators do or how government business is conducted? What about the interests of other groups besides "the people"? To what extent do other groups influence how government is run? Who has the most power in directing the course of the nation? The president and Congress? Judges? Big business and the military? What happens behind the scenes? Who really rules America?

THEORY OF PLURALISM Sociologists have devised two answers to the question of who rules America—the *pluralist* theory of power and the idea of a *power elite*. According to the **pluralist model**, power is held by a variety of organizations and institutions (such as corporations, political parties, professional organizations, and ethnic and religious groups), each with its own resources and interests. Each organization is assumed to have equal access to the power structure, and a system of checks and balances in the form of laws, policies, and the courts keeps any one group from having too much power over the others (Dahl 1961). Conflict theorists, however, argue that power is held by a small but extremely influential group of individuals who form an elite social class.



Power Elites Many of the most powerful men in the United States spend two weeks of every summer in a campground north of San Francisco called Bohemian Grove. Founded as a place for the nations' leaders to gather and escape from outside concerns like business, politics, and power, the men's club's members include every Republican president since 1923, many CEOs, and other prominent businessmen. In this photo, Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon sit on either side of Harvey Hancock (standing).

THEORY OF POWER ELITES One of the first to propose this theory was sociologist C. Wright Mills (1956). According to Mills, the **power elite** is composed of a relatively small number of people who occupy the top positions of control within the economic, political, and military institutions of the country. This group controls the key decision-making processes in the United States. These members of the elite have the full power and weight of their respective institutions at their disposal. Thus their actions have tremendous implications for the population. For instance, military leaders may persuade the president to declare war, senators may pass legislation that cuts billions of dollars from social welfare programs, and corporate executives may post record gains for stockholders or downsize companies and lay off thousands of workers.

G. William Domhoff has studied the power elite extensively, looking at how the economic, political, and military institutions overlap and form a network of influence (1983, 1987, 1990, 2002). The relationships among the individuals heading these different institutions is fascinating. The power elite not only know each other personally and professionally, but they also recognize their status as part of the ultimate "members only" club. Many of them were born into powerful families who still control huge U.S. corporations. Many of the power elite attended the same prep schools and Ivy League colleges. They may live in the same neighborhoods or belong to the same country clubs. They may go to the same churches or give to the same charities. More important, they often serve on each other's boards of directors and do business directly with other members.

Drawing on the same theoretical background, Thomas Dye also studied power elites in his book *Who's Running America? The Bush Restoration*. Dye systematically investigated the actual formal positions in "major corporate, governmental, legal, educational, civic, and cultural institutions in the nation" (2002, p. 8). In so doing, he identified only 5,778 individuals in elite positions, meaning that fewer than 0.0026 percent of the entire U.S. population are among the power elite. These individuals also tend to be white males, although a few powerful women and ethnic or racial minorities also hold elite positions.

What are the implications of this class dominance theory of power? For one, it debunks the original American rags-to-riches mythology that says anyone who works hard can get to the top. If power is concentrated in such a small fraction of a percentage of the population, chances are that the average person will never wield any real power, regardless of his or her work ethic or life choices. Furthermore, the United States continues to be controlled by white, upper-class men. Finally, those who have the power to create social change by economic, political, or military reforms may choose to do so only when it is to their own advantage. So who runs America after all?

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

The American political system is organized so that individuals, groups, and organizations can contribute to candidates' campaigns. **Special interest groups** (sometimes called pressure groups) play an important role in the political process. These are

power elite C. Wright Mills's term for a relatively small number of people who control the economic, political, and military institutions of a society

special interest groups organizations that raise and spend money to influence elected officials and/or public opinion

TABLE 11.2 **Top Twenty PAC Contributors to Federal Candidates, 2007–2008**

PAC NAME	Total	Percent to Democrats	Percent to Republicans
National Association of Realtors	$3,122,000	57%	43%
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers	$2,666,300	98%	2%
American Bankers Association	$2,631,850	40%	60%
Operating Engineers Union	$2,612,957	86%	14%
National Beer Wholesalers Association	$2,426,500	53%	47%
AT&T Inc.	$2,415,200	41%	59%
Air Line Pilots Association	$2,309,500	85%	15%
National Auto Dealers Association	$2,280,000	34%	66%
American Association for Justice	$2,277,500	95%	5%
International Association of Fire Fighters	$2,149,900	76%	24%
Machinists and Aerospace Workers Union	$1,964,300	96%	4%
Laborers Union	$1,943,500	92%	8%
National Air Traffic Controllers Association	$1,934,975	79%	21%
Credit Union National Association	$1,914,049	52%	48%
Sheet Metal Workers Union	$1,911,360	96%	4%
Plumbers and Pipefitters Union	$1,855,925	94%	6%
Service Employees International Union	$1,839,700	94%	6%
Honeywell International	$1,815,616	53%	47%
American Dental Association	$1,805,612	53%	47%
United Auto Workers	$1,802,450	99%	1%

SOURCE: Center for Responsive Politics 2008c

organizations formed expressly to raise and spend money in order to influence elected officials and public opinion. Special interest groups can include corporate organizations, lobbies, political action committees (PACs), and more recently, 527 committees. Despite strict regulations and recent reforms on campaign finance spending, these groups' contributions to candidates can reach into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The average citizen may have little idea of the influence of wealthy donor organizations in the political process. There is almost always a positive correlation between a candidate's campaign spending and her or his success: money wins elections. During the 2008 election, for instance, in 93 percent of House of Representatives races and 94 percent of Senate races, the candidate who spent the most money won. And in the presidential race, Barack Obama, the victor, raised more than $639 million to John McCain's $360 million (Center for Responsive Politics 2008a, 2008b). As in the presidential race, incumbents (those already occupying the electoral seat) are usually in the best position to raise money because of their high-profile position, and incumbency, therefore, is the most important advantage a candidate can have because it tends to lead to fund-raising success and victory at the polls.

political action committee (PAC) an organization that raises money to support the interests of a select group or organization

Political action committees (PACs) are organizations designed to raise money to support the interests of a select group or organization. For instance BAMPAC, or Black America Political Action Committee, represents the special interests of African Americans, while AAPAC, the Arab American PAC, lobbies for political interests of Arab Americans. NOW PAC, the National Organization for Women PAC, advocates feminist issues. Even the interests of extraterrestrials are represented through X-PPAC, the Extraterrestrial Phenomena PAC. By 2008, there were over 4,234 registered PACs in the United States (Center for Responsive Politics 2008c). PACs direct their

efforts to local, state, and/or national governmental levels. They might focus on individuals, parties, or branches of government such as the Federal Drug Administration. They might endorse candidates most likely to win or those who would best represent their specific interests (Sorauf 1988; Clawson, Neustadtl, and Scott 1992).

Political action committees have emerged as a primary source of campaign contributions, rivaling political parties and extremely wealthy individual donors. PAC spending has increased dramatically in the past few decades, with 2004 reaching peak sums: PACs raised approximately $630 million, spent $515 million on ads and mailings, and contributed $205 million to federal candidates (Federal Election Commission 2009). Table 11.2 shows the top 20 PAC donors to federal candidates in the 2007–2008 election cycle. Note the range of interests represented, from unions to corporate groups. Perhaps not surprisingly, most unions tend to fund Democrats, while most corporate groups support Republicans.

Another type of special interest group, **527 committees**, also became particularly important in the 2004 presidential election. Their name comes from section 527 of the tax code, which was originally designed to help political parties avoid taxation. However, it is now being used by supporters of politicians and special interests to get around campaign finance laws, especially limits on individual contributions and the spending caps imposed on political candidates. Although not officially or formally connected to a candidate, 527s do all the same things that any campaign does: conduct polls and surveys, buy advertisements, and try to influence voters. Examples of high-profile 527s from the 2004 election were the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and MoveOn.org, unofficially affiliated with the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively.

These 527 committees became much more important after passage of the bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, more commonly known as the McCain-Feingold Act. There have long been limits on how much money individuals may donate to a particular candidate, but before McCain-Feingold was passed, individuals and interest groups could funnel much larger amounts of "soft money" directly to a political party, essentially a sneaky way to give more. The McCain-Feingold Act attempted to eliminate this practice. Under the new law, hard money contribution limits were raised to $2,000 per person and soft money contribution limits were set at $25,000. However, there are still no limits on the contributions donors can make to 527 committees. Consequently, more money than ever is being spent on political campaigns. In particular, 527s spent more than $550 million on the 2004 election. Although 527s remained important to political fundraising, the 2008 election witnessed a surprising decline in the amount of money they raised to just $185 million.

527 committees organizations that have no official connection to a candidate but that raise and spend funds like a campaign does; named after the section of the tax code that authorizes their existence

Fourth Estate the media, which are considered like a fourth branch of government (after the executive, legislative, and judiciary) and thus serve as another of the checks and balances on power

Scholars, activists, and politicians often disagree about the extent of special interest influence on the decision-making processes of elected officials (Magleby 2000; Green 2004). Those who support PACs claim that more minority candidates are elected to office with their funding and that PACs ensure the representation of a diversity of interests (Berry 1993). Opponents argue that PACs are responsible for increased overall campaign spending and that they can thus exert influence over legislation, usually representing corporate interests to the exclusion of public interests (*Common Cause* 1996). They also argue that PACs increase the odds that incumbents will be reelected. Though it has been difficult to make definitive conclusions about the relationships between special interest groups and legislators, the staggering amounts of money these groups generate cannot be ignored. As sociologists, we seek to uncover the mechanisms of influence in our political system. Monitoring the actions of top donors, PACs, 527s, and other special interest groups brings insight in how our political system works.

The Media and the Political Process

THE MEDIA AS THE FOURTH ESTATE In addition to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the media play a key role in the political process. This has been true since the founding of the country and has taken on even more significant proportions in the postindustrial era. Often referred to as the **Fourth Estate** of government, the media render checks and balances on power much like the three government branches. Although the media can also serve to entertain, they were originally intended to inform and educate the populace and to serve as a watchdog on government. In fact, the framers of the Constitution probably envisioned the watchdog role as the media's primary function. After all, they believed that a free press was essential to the health of the new democracy. Thus, the First Amendment guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the press (along with other rights).

Still, it's hard to imagine that our forefathers could have envisioned what "the press" would become. To them, it literally meant printing presses. There were no broadcast media, or electronic or digital media, back then—no mass media as we know them. So, contemporary lawmakers have had to interpret the Constitution in light of modern concerns and



The Media's Role in the Political Process The power of television to bring political news from around the world has transformed the political process. For example, the Civil Rights Movement, the attacks on September 11, 2001, or the disaster surrounding Hurricane Katrina would not have had such widespread impact without mass media.

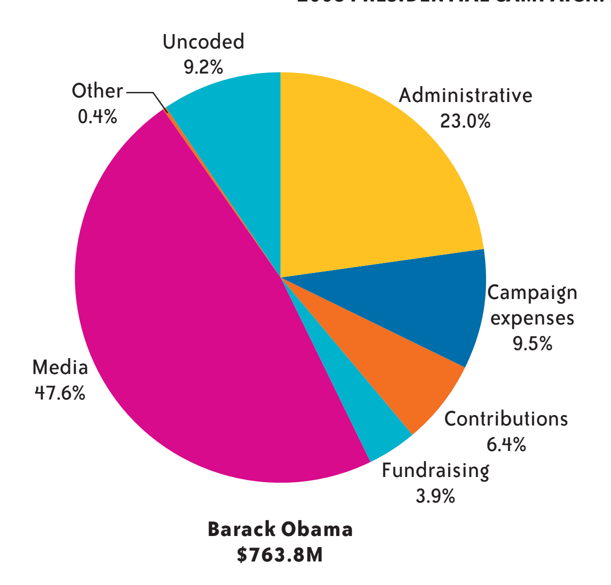
developments. They must try to balance the rights of a free press while protecting the country from abuses of power by the media or by the individuals who own the media. And we must all consider the media's tremendous potential to sway and manipulate our thoughts and feelings and to impact the political process.

The media have always played a role in American politics, informing the public about the important issues of the day. But their role has increased dramatically over the last 50 years, coinciding with the advent of television in 1948 and now the internet. Many of the social movements and landmark political events of the past several decades have unfolded before us on the TV or computer screen. It's unlikely that the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, Watergate, the impeachment of President Clinton, or the attacks of 9/11 would have emerged, developed, and resolved the way they did without the media to bring those issues and images into our living rooms. And for a little while, Americans talked about those issues. The media can make momentous events a part of the national dialogue and involve voters, citizens, and even global attention, influencing public opinion and promoting political activism and change.

MEDIA INFLUENCE ON POLITICS Some of the most significant changes in the political process have occurred in the realm of campaigns and elections. Political actors have adapted to a media-saturated society, and their strategies for success must include great media savvy (Skarzynska 2004). Any group or individual wishing to influence the voters must court the media, either through attempting to gain coverage of a particular issue or candidate or by directly buying space or time through advertisements. Fund-raising, gathering money to spend on media exposure, has become the first order of political business (Ulbrich 2004).

At one time, the voting public was informed of the issues through local political party representatives, town hall

2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: MAJOR EXPENSES



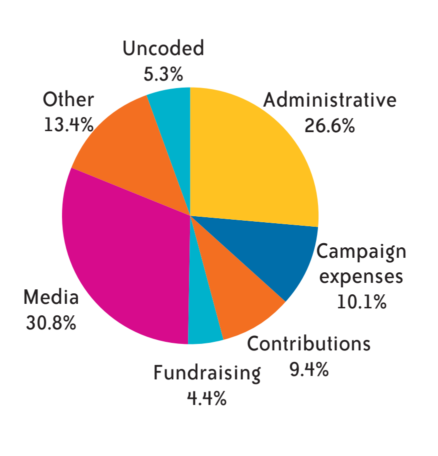


FIGURE 11.1 Spending on the Campaign Trail
Compare the proportion of each candidate's budget spent on media to the proportions devoted to all other campaign expenses. The size of each pie chart reflects the total expenditures of each candidate.

SOURCE: Center for Responsive Politics 2009

meetings, church groups, speeches made by politicians or activists out on the stump, or exhaustive coverage in newspapers or on radio. Nowadays, media coverage of politics is more likely to emphasize human interest stories, personalities, high-profile spectacles, and planned events and less likely to explain the background and implications of issues and policy debates (Kellner 2005). And not all news programs offer strictly objective reporting. We hear a lot about politics through pundits, those who offer political media commentary.

The public is also influenced by **opinion leaders**, high-profile people who interpret political information for us (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). Instead of getting information about the issues directly, we allow our views to be shaped by these opinion leaders whom we trust to tell us what to believe. Someone like Oprah Winfrey, for instance, can influence not only what we read but perhaps our political values as well. Even within your group of friends, there may be someone who, while not as famous as Oprah, is more politically savvy than the rest of the group and can communicate information to you in ways that may influence your opinions.

STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE? It is no wonder that celebrity politicians are becoming more common and popular. After all, who knows better how to use the media, how to stand before the cameras and speak in interviews, than those who have been professionally trained as actors? President Ronald Reagan, formerly a Hollywood actor and commercial spokesperson, is perhaps the greatest example of this. He knew how to hit his marks and deliver his lines. He was even called "The Great Communicator" despite his inability to speak extemporaneously.

Any form of celebrity seems to make an individual more visible and popular. Others have followed in Reagan's path, from basketball star Bill Bradley, astronaut John Glenn, and comedian Al Franken, who became senators, to wrestler Jesse Ventura and actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who both became governors, singer Sonny Bono, who became a congressman, and actor Clint Eastwood, who became a mayor.

Does the increased focus on a politician's style and personality, rather than on the politician's platform and policies, mean that we are getting less of real substance in what we consume? Another feature of modern politics is "sound bytes"—those short audio or visual snippets taken from press releases, press conferences, photo opportunities, or sometimes protests. In our postmodern era, the news has been condensed into just a few seconds' worth of information. What politicians say to the press is often scripted by "spin doctors" who manipulate rhetoric to give it a positive appearance designed to be catchy and compelling while not necessarily delivering much substance; many people form their views of candidates from these processed bits of information.

It is not only elected officials, journalists, or other leaders who may influence us; some of us get our news from such sources as talk show hosts, like Jay Leno on the *Tonight Show* or even someone like Howard Stern or the latest correspondent on MTV. In a recent poll, 21 percent of people between 18 and 29 years of age cited *Saturday Night Live* and Jon Stewart of Comedy Central's *Daily Show* as their primary sources of political news (Pew Research Center 2004).

opinion leaders high-profile individuals whose interpretation of events influences the public

TABLE 11.3 Generational Divide in Sources of Campaign News

REGULARLY LEARN SOMETHING FROM . . .	AGE			AGE GAP
	18–29	30–49	50+	
Local news	25%	39%	50%	–25
Sunday political TV	4	12	21	–17
Nightly network news	24	28	40	–16
Daily newspaper	25	26	38	–13
Morning TV shows	18	21	25	–7
Religious radio	5	8	12	–7
Cable news networks	35	36	41	–6
National Public Radio	13	19	19	–6
News magazines	8	9	13	–5
Talk radio	12	16	17	–5
TV magazine programs	21	19	25	–4
C-SPAN	6	9	9	–3
Comedy TV shows	12	7	6	+6
Internet	42	26	15	+27

SOURCE: Pew Research Center 2008b

NEW MEDIA AND POLITICS As much as the mass media changed the political process in the twentieth century, it seems likely that the so-called new media will transform it all the more. Sometimes called "Web 2.0," the new media that have developed on the internet all move beyond simply providing information and stress interaction, networking, and user-generated content.

The internet has now become a leading source of campaign news for young people, and social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook play an important part in the story. In the 2008 election, 42 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds said that they regularly learned about the campaign from the internet, the highest percentage for any news source (Table 11.3). That represents a big jump since the 2004 election, when just 20 percent of young people said they got their campaign news from the internet (Pew Research Center 2008b).

But the power and potential of the new media in the political process cuts both ways. It used to be that politicians only had to really watch what they said when reporters were around, and even then they could go off the record if they needed to. But today all it takes is one person with a camera phone or her own blog to turn an off-hand comment into big news.

That is exactly what happened to Republican Senator George Allen of Virginia in 2006 during a very tight race against Democrat Jim Webb. The Webb campaign had begun sending a video "tracker" to cover Allen's public appearances, a practice that has become common. For many of these events the videographer was Shekar Ramanuja Sidarth, a campaign volunteer whose parents had immigrated to the United States from India before he was born. Although he reported that the campaign staff had been quite courteous to him up to that point, on August 11, Allen was giving a speech at a state park when he noticed Sidarth filming him. Ironically, Allen began by saying he was going to "run this campaign on positive, constructive ideas" but then proceeded to point out Sidarth, referring to him as "macaca, or whatever his name is," and asking the crowd to welcome him to America.

When asked about the incident later, Sidarth said "I could feel his hostility. I just did my best to keep filming. As soon as I was finished I called the Webb campaign. They were shocked and they posted it on YouTube pretty quickly" (Baldwin 2007). The video swiftly went "viral," garnering hundreds of thousands of hits and showing up in blogs to underscore allegations of racism against Allen. The story, of course, was also picked up by the mainstream media. Allen tried to defend himself by claiming that "macaca" was just a made-up word, while his critics argued that it was a racist slur and that he had used it as such. Allen was defeated as much by his opponent Webb as by a shameful moment captured and disseminated through the new media.

Clearly, the media play an important role in informing and educating the voting public. Despite our "free press," however, we must also be aware of how the media can be used to achieve the purposes of powerful interest groups and individuals. The democratic system stands to suffer if only those with the most money or celebrity can influence public opinion by buying their way into the hearts and minds of Americans. The next Data Workshop gives you the opportunity to gain more firsthand knowledge about the relationship between the media and politics.



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

The Social Construction of the Presidency

A dramatic example of the media's impact on politics occurred during the presidential campaign of 1960. The debates between John F. Kennedy, the Democrat, and Richard Nixon, the Republican, were the first to be broadcast live on television. Kennedy, the younger candidate, recognized the power of television and understood the importance of presenting a "telegenic" image. He allowed media handlers to advise him on makeup, hairstyle, clothes, and the appropriate demeanor for the TV cameras. Conversely, Nixon refused to make any special preparation for the event. As a seasoned politician, he planned to rely on his command of the issues and his considerable debating skills.

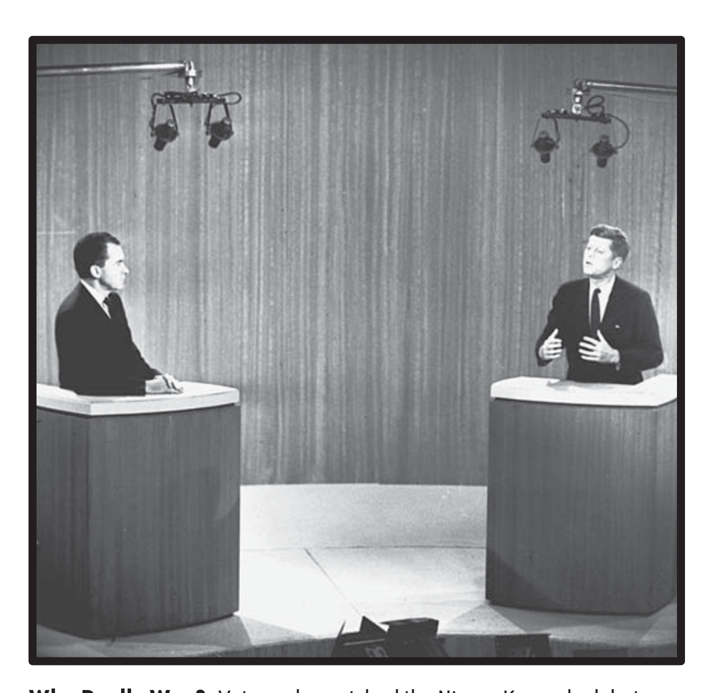
Those who watched the debates on television saw dramatic differences between the two candidates. Kennedy looked fresh, young, and energetic; Nixon looked sweaty, old, and tired. Those who listened to the debates on the radio, as previous generations had for years, judged the two candidates not by looks or mannerisms but by the content of their speech. When polled after the debates, audiences who watched on TV thought that Kennedy won the debate; audiences who listened on radio thought Nixon was the winner. As history shows, Kennedy won the election and helped to change the relationship between the media and political campaigns. Although Kennedy's performance during the debate was only one factor in the election, it was significant. Other presidential candidates became so nervous about the effects of televised debates that none agreed to participate in them until 1976.

This Data Workshop requires you to focus on how the media may try to construct political realities. You will be using existing sources and conducting a content analysis of the media-politics connection as portrayed in one of two films—*Dave* (rated PG-13) or *Wag the Dog* (rated R). In each of these movies, the media manipulate images and symbols to affect the public's perception of political events. It doesn't matter whether you have seen these movies before; you will now be looking with a sociological lens.

simulacrum an image or media representation that does not reflect reality in any meaningful way but is treated as real

As you watch one of these films, remember sociologist Jean Baudrillard's (1994) claim that "the image has come to replace the real." Baudrillard proposed that we would lose the ability to distinguish between what is real and what is fake, especially where media representations are involved, and that we would also come to accept the fake as sufficient—thereby no longer needing the real. He called this new artificially constructed "reality" the **simulacrum**, or a simulation that becomes as good as real. The idea is a little bit like the old adage "seeing is believing," with a postmodern twist. The problem with this kind of believing is that the eye can be tricked, and images can be manipulated.

While watching the movie, jot down examples of how the media handlers or consultants in the film are creating images and beliefs about the president. Answer the following questions and pose some of your own.



Who Really Won? Voters who watched the Nixon–Kennedy debates on television believed that Kennedy won the debate. However, people who listened to the broadcast on the radio thought Nixon was the winner. How do different forms of media construct political reality?



Constructing the Presidency
How do films such as *Dave* and *Wag the Dog* portray the way the media manipulates public perception of political figures?

- What political events and persons are orchestrated, staged, or scripted in advance?
- How do the media specialists achieve their goals? What specific actions do they take?
- What role do the public play in believing what they see? When, if at all, do the public seem too gullible in the movie?
- In our daily lives, how can we tell the difference between what is real and what is fake?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: View the movie of your choice. Keep in mind the questions above during viewing. Make some notes about your observations. Discuss the movies with classmates in small groups. Compare your analyses and insights with others.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: View the movie of your choice. Note particular scenes, characters, or dialogue to include in your analysis. Write a three- to four-page essay, taking into consideration the questions above, as well as the material in the section on the media and politics, to frame your argument.

Politics: Linking Micro- and Macrosociology

Political institutions and their products (such as laws or bureaucratic systems) shape our everyday lives. A law such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ensures your right to apply for and hold a job without being discriminated against because of race, gender, or religion—no matter who you are or what kind of work you do, you are protected by this law. And even if you have never experienced discrimination in the workplace, this law is probably one of the reasons why. Huge government bureaucracies like the Department of Education shape your everyday life as well. Even if you attend a private university, you had to fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to determine your eligibility for any type of financial aid—federal and state grants and loans and aid programs administered by your campus. All these student aid sources require the FAFSA, and your ability to attend the college of your choice may therefore depend on the decisions made by this government bureaucracy.

In addition to seeing how political institutions shape our everyday lives, it is important to remember that we have built these institutions ourselves, through our participation in the democratic process. When we vote, sign petitions, or participate in demonstrations, we bring our individual influence to bear on the larger social structure—even if, ultimately, the cause or candidate we support doesn't prevail. So remember, micro-macro connections are made every day as you participate with others in political processes and live in a culture shaped by its political institutions.

Democratic processes require a free press and an educated polity; to make decisions and cast votes, you must have the tools to gather information and comprehend the issues and questions your vote will influence. This is only one of the many links between political institutions and educational institutions in our society. As we move into the segment of this chapter that deals with education, try to think of all the ways that politics and education are connected—and remember to look for micro-macro connections as you learn about educational institutions as well.

What Is Education?

Most modern political systems recognize the importance of universal education. The framers of the U.S. Constitution realized that an informed public was essential to the survival of democracy. Education, therefore, was seen as critical to the founding of the new republic. In the United States, public education has traditionally been under state and local control, although the federal government began playing a larger role in the latter half of the twentieth century. However, private schools and religious schools are also involved in education. About 10 percent of K–12 students attend private schools (either religious or secular); 88 percent attend public schools, and 2 percent are homeschooled.

Education is the central means by which a society transmits its knowledge, values, and expectations to its members. The general goal of education is to give students the necessary understanding for effective social functioning. Education often includes the transmission of principles and values, the regulation of personal character, and discipline of the mind. It can provide information and convey knowledge to individuals. Education can be either formal or informal and can occur in a variety of settings, although we commonly think of it as tied to school systems.

A Brief History of Modern Education

education the process by which a society transmits its knowledge, values, and expectations to its members so they can function effectively

Formal, institutionalized, secular education in Western civilization began in ancient Greece around the eighth century B.C.E., when students studied philosophy, mathematics, music, and gymnastics. Higher education was carried out by philosophers before the rise of schools as an institution. In the Middle Ages, the church was the main educator, with schools in monasteries and cathedrals, and until about 1200, the schools focused mainly on training students to be priests. Over the thirteenth century, lay education emerged. It consisted of apprentice training for a small group of the common people or education in chivalry for the more privileged. During the Middle Ages, universities offered courses in three subjects—law, theology, and medicine—and these courses were available only to the most privileged members of the society: royals, aristocrats, and those from families with ties to the monarchy and the church.

While systems of education have evolved a great deal since the Middle Ages, the roots of what we would recognize as modern mass education can be traced back to the idealism of the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, the value of education greatly increased. The leading thinkers of the day, such as Voltaire,



The Rise of Mass Education Beginning in the nineteenth century, schooling began to be considered a necessity for preparing children to enter modern industrial occupations.

Locke, and Franklin, emphasized knowledge—reason, logic, and science—over religious tradition. They were convinced that the well-being and future of modern society depended upon enlightened self-knowledge, which could be achieved only through learning.

Education in the United States grew rapidly during this same period. The founders' belief that the government has the responsibility to provide basic education to all its citizens—and that fulfilling this obligation is beneficial for both society and the individual—helped to create the U.S public education system. Schooling came to be seen as a necessity rather than a luxury and became legally mandatory for all children 16 and younger—Massachusetts was the first state to enact such a law in 1852. As larger proportions of the population began attending schools, curricula became more varied and included both academic and vocational education to prepare students for a diversifying set of future occupations (not just farming or housewifery). Elementary, junior high, and high schools had spread to every state and territory in the nation, including Alaska, by 1929, and opportunities for higher education also expanded, especially in the land-grant colleges of the western United States.

Higher education is now available to everyone in the United States. Before 1900, fewer than 2 percent of Americans finished high school, and even fewer went on to college. The current public high school graduation rate hovers around an average of 70 percent nationwide, with variations according to state and school district (Georgia has the lowest rate at 54 percent, Iowa the highest at 93 percent), as well as race, ethnicity, and national background. Another 25 percent of American adults hold college degrees.

Education and the Reproduction of Society

Schooling serves a number of important functions in our society. The transmission of knowledge is a clear function of education, but in addition, we learn to follow society's rules and to respect authority, and we are socialized to develop other qualities that will eventually make us efficient and obedient workers. In school, we also learn our places in the larger society—practices such as **tracking**, in which students are identified as gifted or placed into remedial education, teach us about success and achievement and our chances for both. When placed in a lower ability or remedial track, for instance, students lose access to courses such as calculus and advanced placement classes (Useem 1990), which effectively locks them out of certain colleges, certain majors, and even certain future careers, all by the time they're 16.

tracking the placement of students in educational "tracks," or programs of study (e.g., college prep, remedial), that determine the types of classes students take

hidden curriculum values or behaviors that students learn indirectly over the course of their schooling because of the structure of the educational system and the teaching methods used

EDUCATION AND INEQUALITY While we firmly believe, as a society, that education is the key to achievement and success, it is also true that educational institutions can replicate systems of inequality. Educational achievements do improve our life chances—U.S. Census data consistently indicate that those with higher educational attainment also have higher median incomes. In 2007, the average annual earnings for men with master's degrees was $67,990, followed by an average of $55,430 for those with bachelor's degrees, $33,070 for those with high school diplomas, and $24,090 for nongraduates. Women with the same educational achievement, however, made considerably less than their male counterparts (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). Thus the data indicate that the benefit of a higher education does not operate in equal measure for all Americans. Stratification within schools often mirrors stratification systems in the larger society, wherein women and girls, minority group students, poor or working-class students, or students with disabilities are discriminated against both by individuals and institutional systems (Oakes 1985; Orfield 2001). So, education benefits everyone, but it does not benefit everyone equally, and inequality in educational benefits mirrors inequality in the larger society.

How do these patterns manifest themselves? What do these educational inequalities look and feel like for students in the classroom? Female students may notice, for instance, that their teachers pay more attention to male students, and they may learn to think that boys are smarter than girls. Caucasian or Asian students may notice that there are fewer African American and Latino students in the gifted classroom than in the remedial classroom, and they may learn to think that whites and Asians are smarter than blacks and Latinos. Children without disabilities may see disabled kids left out of activities or sent to the special education center and learn to think that these students are less worthy than nondisabled kids. These micro-inequities are common in American classrooms. They are experienced by individuals but are the result of structural forces external to those individuals—in other words, micro-inequities result from macro-level inequalities in the larger educational and social systems. And these micro-inequities teach us as much as our more explicit lessons in math, literature, or history. Acquiring a sociological perspective on educational institutions and processes will help us "unlearn" these lessons and understand that educational attainment is often as much about social stratification as it is about individual ability.

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM Sociologists have long been interested in the **hidden curriculum**, the lessons that

students learn indirectly but that are an implicit part of their socialization in the school environment (Jackson 1968). Many sociologists have analyzed the hidden curriculum to explain the nonacademic roles filled by mass education.

One such role is the training of future workers, which was examined by Bowles and Gintis (1977) in their study *Schooling in Capitalist America*. They argue that schools train a labor force with the appropriate skills, personalities, and attitudes for an industrial economy. Although the official curriculum is supposed to promote personal improvement and social mobility, the hidden curriculum of "rules, routines, and regulations" actually produces a submissive and obedient workforce that is prepared to take orders and perform repetitive tasks. According to this analysis, schools look a lot like factories. Students have no control over their curriculum, must obey instructions, and gain little intrinsic satisfaction from their schoolwork. Because students learn these norms and values in school, they are willing to accept similar conditions when they become workers.

A similar analysis can explain how the hidden curriculum reinforces and reproduces conditions of social inequality by presenting and reinforcing an image of what is considered "normal," "right," or "good." While the official curriculum has come a long way toward recognizing the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the nation, there are still major gaps and exclusions (FitzGerald 1980). For example, researcher Stephen Thornton (2003) found that school social studies curricula systematically excluded any mention of gays or lesbians—and that this silence communicated that nonheterosexuals aren't worth mentioning, that they are not full members of society, and that they don't (or shouldn't) exist. Schools cannot always rectify these gaps or exclusions because the hidden curriculum can work through much more subtle mechanisms as well. How the curriculum is presented and the way the school is organized can be powerful messengers of the hidden curriculum. For instance, even schools that attempt to implement multicultural education may undermine their own efforts if the staff and administration do not mirror the lessons they teach. If teachers and administrators are mostly white, mostly heterosexual, or mostly male (or mostly female, as is the case in lower grades), they may belie the very lessons they try to teach—what students hear and what they see just don't add up. When schools attempt to alter only what is taught and not the way it is taught, they may change the curriculum but they won't affect what students are learning (Falconer and Byrnes 2003; Christakis 1995).

Classic Studies of Education

Sociologists and other researchers have studied education from a variety of perspectives. In this section we review three classic studies of education, each offering a different approach and distinctive insights into its significance, both as a social institution and in the lives of individuals.

A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST STUDY The first study looks at education from the symbolic-interactionist perspective, which maintains that the social world is constructed through the interactions of individuals. Robert Rosenthal, a Harvard psychologist, and Leonore Jacobson, an elementary school principal, worked together on *Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectation and Pupils' Intellectual Development* (1968). The researchers began the experiment by



Hidden Curriculum Bowles and Gintis argue that schools train students to be ideal workers by promoting a curriculum of "rules, routines, and regulations." These honor students at Philadelphia High School for Girls (left) and soldiers at the U.S. Central Command's "Deployable Headquarters" (right) apply their training.

administering a basic IQ test to students in the first through sixth grades, although they told teachers the test was designed to predict which students would "bloom" academically in the next year. They then randomly selected an experimental group of students and falsely told their teachers that these students were predicted to develop rapidly in the coming school year. At the end of the year, the researchers administered the same IQ test and found that students in the experimental group had increased their IQ scores by a significantly greater margin than their peers in the control group. They concluded that the teachers' attitudes about their students unintentionally influenced their academic performance. In other words, when teachers expected students to succeed, the students indeed tended to improve (and it was assumed that the opposite would be true as well).

The results of *Pygmalion in the Classroom* have been critiqued by other researchers, on both theoretical and methodological grounds, especially because the researchers used standardized IQ tests and small subject samples (Baker and Crist 1971). Nonetheless, this study and others support the proposition that teacher expectations affect students' behavior and achievement in measurable ways. Some studies indicate that student labeling is often arbitrary and biased, with the result that teachers—whether consciously or unconsciously—may be reinforcing existing class, ethnic, ability, and gender inequalities (Fairbanks 1992; Sadker and Sadker 1995). This also means that changes in classroom interaction could lead to an improvement in academic performance among students from underprivileged backgrounds.

A CONFLICT STUDY The next study, which also looks at inequalities in schools, is consistent with a conflict perspective, which sees society as a system characterized by inequality and competition. Former teacher Jonathan Kozol wrote *Savage Inequalities* (1991), which describes his ethnographic study of public schools in Chicago and its suburbs. Kozol contends that because schools are funded by local property taxes, children in poor neighborhoods are trapped in poor schools, which reinforces inequality. He documents the significant differences among America's schools: "the highest spending districts have twice as many art, music, and foreign language teachers . . . 75 percent more physical education teachers . . . 50 percent more nurses, school librarians, guidance counselors, and psychologists . . . and 60 percent more personnel in school administration than the low-spending districts" (Kozol 1991, p. 167).

When Kozol interviewed the parents and students in wealthy school districts, he discovered that many of them believe educational inequalities are a thing of the past, "something dating maybe back to slavery or maybe to the era of official segregation" but not to anything "recent or contemporary or ongoing" (Kozol 1991, p. 179). In stark contrast to this view, Kozol describes underfunded schools he visited—the hundreds of classrooms without teachers in Chicago, the thousands of children without classrooms in schools throughout New Jersey. His overall impression was that these urban schools were, by and large, extraordinarily unhappy places. How, he asks, could the children in these schools have an equal chance at success? A structural functionalist might respond that schools are not intended to provide equal chances.

A STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL STUDY According to the structural-functionalist perspective, educational inequality is merely preparation for occupational inequalities later in life. (Remember, functionalists believe that every social phenomenon has a role to play in keeping society at equilibrium.) In the third study, *The Credential Society*, sociologist Randall Collins (1979) argues that class inequalities are reproduced in educational settings and that there is very little schools can do to increase learning. Although many people assume that better teachers, better facilities, and better funding could increase test scores, he points out that when class background factors are held constant, none of these other factors seem to have any effect. Collins believes that reproducing the existing class structure is the true function of education. Schools, for example, provide the credentials to assure that the children of the middle class will continue to receive middle-class jobs. To protect their own job security, members of lucrative occupations, such as accountants, lawyers, and financial analysts, have set up a complicated credential system (education) to keep the number of job applicants down and to ensure that there is a large population forced to work at unpleasant jobs for low wages. Collins makes the radical recommendation that we consider "abolishing compulsory school requirements and making formal credential requirements for employment illegal" (Collins 1979, p. 198). This would make it illegal for employers to ask how much education a job applicant has, much as it is currently illegal to ask about race or gender.

The Crisis in Education

Over the past several decades, many educators, parents, and legislators have come to believe that America's educational system is in crisis, that public schools are failing to provide adequate training for students. Critics list a variety of problems including low rates of literacy and poor standardized test scores, lack of sufficient funding and crumbling infrastructure, low pay for teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and high rates of crime on campus. A 1999 study showed that while 40 percent of white students passed a history exam

required for public high school graduation in Virginia, only 23 percent of Hispanic students and 13 percent of black students scored passing grades (Fairfax County Public Schools 1999). This type of "achievement gap" was visible in other states' educational data as well. And in 1998, an international survey showed U.S. twelfth graders ranked sixteenth and seventeenth in the world in science and math, respectively (U.S. Department of Education 1998). Data like these seemed to point to a decline in American educational standards and competitiveness, and politicians began to respond.

To address some of these crises, Congress passed the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) bill in 2002. According to this policy, each state is responsible for testing every student in its public education system at specific grade intervals to determine levels of success. Low-performing schools are identified with "school report cards" and are required to improve both student and teacher performance. Parents also have the option of removing their children from consistently low-performing schools and placing them in other schools within the district.

In theory, No Child Left Behind seems to promote equal education. It holds schools and teachers accountable for student performance, and it gives parents some autonomy in school choice. On the surface these aims are ideal, but is NCLB really achieving equality of education? Critics believe it is not.

One concern is that NCLB relies on standardized test scores (in reading comprehension, writing, and math) to determine educational success. Standardized tests rest on the assumption that one level of aptitude is appropriate for all students, regardless of race, nationality, or intellectual capabilities and desires. Researchers have long noted that standardized test scores are ambiguous predictors of success for women and students of color (Epps 2001). Girls tend to get better grades than boys, but they score lower on standardized tests like the SAT and ACT. Possible explanations for this include biased questions and gender differences in learning and test-taking styles (Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium 1993). Thus, if standardized tests are increasingly used to evaluate students' progress, designate grades, and award diplomas and/or scholarship funds, women and students of color may lose out. An alternate approach for NCLB might be to use other measures, such as the schools' retention rates of minorities and/or low-income students, volunteerism and other social activism, or even depression levels of students. While most people agree that standardized testing of basic skills does have some validity as a measure of students' aptitude, such tests cannot evaluate the entire experience of a student in the public schools.

A related concern about NCLB is that the test scores are also being used to measure teacher and school performance. Teachers, now under pressure to ensure that their students perform satisfactorily on standardized tests, often are "teaching to the test." As a result, other learning experiences—music, art, field trips, and so on—may be dropped from the curriculum. Schools that perform well will be rewarded with a variety of incentives, possibly including financial rewards. Schools that do not perform well will be sanctioned with withdrawal of funds because of departing students and possible school closure or "restructuring." Thus, some schools, like suburban schools with homogenous racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic populations, will continue to do well while others, such as inner-city schools with more diverse populations, will suffer.

As sociologists, we must ask: what are the other options for fixing the American system of education? We look at some of the answers in the next section.

The Present and Future of Education

What will American education look like in the future? A number of educational trends are already in place and may play an important role in the years ahead: charter schools, early college high schools, homeschooling, school vouchers, community colleges, and distance learning.

CHARTER SCHOOLS **Charter schools** are public schools, but they are run by private entities, such as a parents' group or an educational corporation. Also, they operate with relative freedom from many of the bureaucratic regulations that apply to traditional public schools. Charter schools represent a compromise position between public and private schools and provide a way for parents to exercise control over their students' educational experiences without completely abandoning the public school system. By 2007, 41 states and the District of Columbia had established charter school programs and over 3,900 charter schools were serving a total of more than 1.1 million students. State laws regarding charter schools governed sponsorship, number of schools, regulatory waivers, degree of fiscal or legal autonomy, and performance expectations.

The "charter" establishing such schools is a contract detailing the school's mission, program, goals, students served, methods of assessment, and ways to measure success. Charter schools are designed to support educational innovation; some have special emphases like arts or science; others offer special services like health clinics or community-based internships for students. A high school in St. Louis called the Construction Careers Center instructs students in the skills needed to work in the building

charter schools public schools run by private entities to give parents greater control over their children's education

On the Job

Rookie Teachers

It was a journey from the Magic Kingdom to Dante's *Inferno*: Teacher Rafe Esquith was returning from a field trip to Disneyland with a bus full of fifth graders when the 1992 Los Angeles riots erupted. He had to keep the children calm and secure in the bus while the driver navigated gunshots, flames, looters, and cops, speeding through the tumult and delivering the kids safely to their school.

Esmé Raji Codell, also a fifth-grade teacher, returned to her Chicago classroom after a 20-minute meeting to discover that her students had stabbed the substitute teacher in the back with a pencil. When the students tried to justify and downplay what they had done ("She didn't die," said one; "She told Vanessa she was stupid," said another), Codell took the opportunity to review the Golden Rule, reminding her students that they should do unto others as they would have others do unto them, even if they didn't like those others. The students then apologized for their behavior.

These are just some of the stories you'll hear rookie teachers tell. Both Rafe Esquith (2003) and Esmé Codell (1999) tell their stories in books about their careers as young elementary school teachers. Some stories are funny, some are horrifying, but they're all real, and they all offer real opportunities to apply sociological insights. In fact, the micro-level experiences of these individual teachers and students



Rafe Esquith **Esmé Raji Codell**

are linked to macro-level social structures like the poverty, inequality, and violence in our society that sparked the L.A. riots and the attack on the substitute teacher.

You may soon get the opportunity to follow in Codell and Esquith's footsteps. Classroom teaching is a common post-graduation job for liberal arts majors. Many college graduates, even those who don't plan to spend the rest of their careers as teachers, do put in some time teaching—at the elementary or secondary level, as a substitute or a regular

trades while also teaching the traditional high school curriculum. In Madison, Wisconsin, educators started Nuestro Mundo Community School, a Spanish immersion program. By fifth grade, all the students are equally fluent in Spanish and English. The Madison school district created the school to help close the gap between the test scores of Hispanic students and their non-Hispanic peers. Ideally, charter schools can make changes and implement decisions faster than ordinary public schools because of their freedom from district governance. They can monitor their successes (and failures) more closely and are more responsive to the needs of students, parents, and communities.

In reality, charter schools face many challenges. They are difficult and sometimes expensive to launch and run. Many struggle to raise funds and meet endless lists of state and local regulations. There are also questions about whether charter schools are any better than ordinary public schools. They have met with only mixed success. A report on charter school students in California found great variation in how well the schools and their students performed (RAND Education, 2003). Although achievement varies by school and by subject matter, charter school students generally have comparable or slightly lower test scores than those in conventional schools. These schools did not necessarily serve more minority students. Nonetheless, charter schools continue to be popular and more will probably open in the coming years, looking to benefit from both the experience of earlier charter schools and the findings of social scientific research.

teacher, in public or private schools, or even in other settings like religious education or organizational training situations. So even if you're not an education major or you don't currently plan to get a teaching credential, these stories could easily be yours.

A number of patterns are visible in the stories of first-year teachers. Most teachers start out enthusiastic, idealistic, and naïve. Codell tells of her admired master teacher who said to her, "You are a gifted teacher. Don't teach. Be an actress instead" (p. 15). At the time, she was puzzled by this piece of advice. Contrast this with Esquith's experience, "I was completely incompetent during my first years in the classroom" (p. 13). But for both of them, it was their naïveté and idealism that helped them through the difficult beginnings.

Both had to deal with the obstacles and limitations of big-city public school bureaucracies, and they did so in ingenious ways. When his school didn't have enough books for the kids to read, Esquith visited all the public libraries in Los Angeles and checked out all the copies of *Of Mice and Men* in the entire city so that his kids could read the books for free. When her fifth graders struggled to read at even a first-grade level, Codell developed a project in which her students had to teach kindergartners about words and letters in creative and entertaining ways—like the "alphabet museum"—but were really improving their own reading skills at the same time.

From the vantage point of their classrooms, both Esquith and Codell saw what poverty, racism, violence, and neglect looked like firsthand—these larger social problems were no longer abstract but visible at the ground level in the lives of their students. After speaking with one student's mother about how to improve the girl's classroom attitude and behavior, Codell watched in horror as the mother beat the student for her transgressions, right there in front of her. One of Esquith's best students stayed after school for hours every day to help him; not until he read a newspaper article about a multiple murder committed by the student's father did he realize that she was trying to avoid danger in her own home (luckily, the student was not harmed in her father's rampage).

Both Esquith and Codell express great love for their students as well as deep frustration and anger—and it's clear that the students feel the same way. But these teachers' creativity, dedication, and compassion have truly made a difference in the lives of their kids, and they each describe priceless moments of grace amid the tempests of their teaching careers. Both are still teachers, both are still in the same big-city public schools, both are still making a difference in students' lives every year. Can you follow in their footsteps?

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS **Early college high schools** are new institutions that blend high school and college into a coherent educational program in which students earn both a high school diploma and two years of college credit toward a bachelor's degree. In addition to local efforts to create these schools, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in partnership with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, has contributed over $120 million to launch early college high schools. In 2008, more than 160 schools in 24 states were serving over 20,000 students; through continued efforts, some 250 schools are planned that would serve over 100,000 students. Each early college high school is a collaborative endeavor between a public school district and an accredited higher education partner. In Phoenix, Arizona, high school students can join the Gateway High School program and simultaneously get a high school diploma and an associate's degree from Gateway Community College. Antioch University in Seattle, Washington, offers a similar program for Native American youth, who have the highest college dropout rate and the lowest graduation rate of any ethnic group in the United States. The goal for these programs is to develop new high schools that engage low-income and underrepresented students by offering them challenging academic work while simultaneously providing the necessary guidance

early college high schools institutions in which students earn a high school diploma and two years of credit toward a bachelor's degree

homeschooling the education of children by their parents, at home

school vouchers payments from the government to parents whose children attend failing public schools; the money helps parents pay private school tuition

community colleges two-year institutions that provide students with general education and facilitate transfer to a four-year university

and support structures. Early college high schools are small (with no more than 75–100 students per grade) and thus can provide the benefits of a close community, an intimate learning environment, and personalized academic attention.

For many students the path to postsecondary education is difficult. Large, impersonal middle and high school programs, limited financial resources, and the daunting processes of applying to and entering higher education may hinder academic achievement. By changing the structure of the high school and compressing the number of years required for an undergraduate degree, early college high schools are designed to reduce obstacles to student success. These schools are already having a significant impact on underserved youth, who are demonstrating high levels of attendance, improved promotion rates, and success in college-level courses.

HOMESCHOOLING **Homeschooling** or home-based education is the education of school-aged children under their parents' supervision outside a regular school campus. Many parents homeschool their children not only to control their academic education but also to limit their exposure to the socializing effects of peer culture in public schools. Some homeschooled children enroll in regular schools part time or share instruction with other families, but most of their education takes place at home. Many families homeschool their children for their entire K–12 years, but many others try it for only a short time.



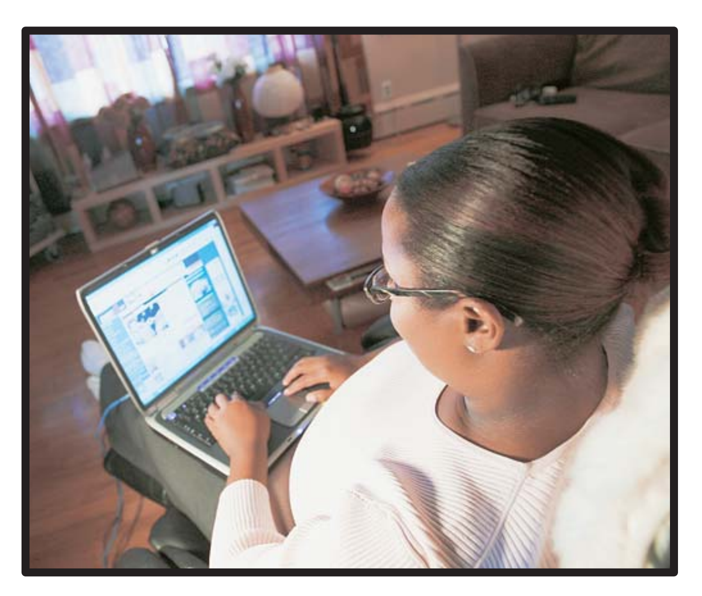
Homeschooling The Wilson family in Myrtle Point, Oregon, study together at the kitchen table as part of their homeschooling program.

Homeschooling in the United States has been growing steadily since the 1980s, with current rates of 5–12 percent a year. There were estimated to be more than 2 million homeschooled students in the United States in 2007–2008. This represents approximately 35 percent of the over 6 million privately schooled student population. Clearly, homeschooling is a significant phenomenon in education, but how is it working? One of the largest studies of homeschooling arrived at rather startling results. The academic achievement of homeschooled students, on average, was significantly above that of public school students (Ray 1997, 2008). In addition, homeschooled students did well even if their parents were not certified teachers and the state did not highly regulate homeschooling. One advantage of homeschooling seems to be the flexibility in customizing curriculum and pedagogy to the needs of each child. Yet questions remain about the possible academic and social disadvantages to students removed from typical school environments.

SCHOOL VOUCHERS First proposed in the 1990s, **school vouchers** allow parents in neighborhoods where the public schools are inadequate to send their children to the private school of their choice. In other words, taxpayers receive a voucher for some of the money that a public school would have received to educate their child, and they apply that money to private school tuition. Most school-voucher programs fund 75 percent to 90 percent of the cost of a private school, with parents making up the rest. Proponents of school vouchers—most notably Bush administration Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (2006)—argue that they give parents more choice and control over their children's education and pressure public schools to improve or risk the loss of their voucher-eligible student body. Opponents—such as Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (2006)—argue that vouchers do not improve public education but do the opposite: they drain funds from vulnerable public schools and cause them to deteriorate further. Furthermore, opponents say, if parents use vouchers for parochial schools, public monies are funding religious education, thus threatening the separation of church and state. In the 2006–2007 school year, there were 24 voucher programs operating in 13 states plus the District of Columbia and serving over 50,000 students. While the Supreme Court has ruled the voucher system to be constitutional and numerous experimental voucher programs are already in place, the privatization of public education remains controversial in any form.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES You know what a community college is—you may even attend one right now. A **community college** is a two-year school that provides general

education classes for students who want to save money while preparing to transfer to a four-year university, right? While this definition of a community college is technically true, community colleges have become much more that just a springboard to a four-year degree. They provide vocational and technical training for people planning practical careers, retrain "downsized" workers seeking new career paths, offer enrichment classes for retirees, and currently provide opportunities of all sorts. In 1901, six students enrolled at the first "junior college" in Joliet, Illinois; just over 100 years later there are 1,202 community colleges across the country (Merrow 2007). Community colleges account for almost half of all higher education enrollments, with over 6.6 million students taking degree, certificate, or transferable courses in 2006–2007. Another 5 million or more community college students take various noncredit courses such as English as a Second Language or job force training. The curricula have expanded from providing basic general education and college preparatory courses to offering honors programs, study abroad options, intercollegiate sports, music programs, on-campus residence halls, and internships. Community colleges help students prepare for careers that give back to the community—the two "hottest" community college programs of study are law enforcement and nursing, with 80 percent of fire fighters, police officers, and EMTs and more than half of all new nurses and health care workers trained at community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges 2007). Community colleges also struggle with issues like declining public funding sources and the changing needs of a growing, diverse student body. Despite these hurdles, though, community colleges continue to provide a wealth of opportunities.



The Rise of Online Colleges Suzanne Lee, who lives in New Jersey, takes an online class in economic crime investigation at New York's Syracuse University.

DISTANCE LEARNING **Distance learning** is not really a new concept—"correspondence courses" have been available for hundreds of years and served as a way for people in remote locations (like farmers and their families) or people who were homebound or physically disabled to benefit from the same educational opportunities available to others. In previous years, distance learning courses relied on the postal service and more recently on audiotapes and videos to help students learn independently. With the advent of the internet and real-time electronic communication, distance learning was transformed forever. Universities and private businesses use these technologies to offer courses to anyone with an internet connection. Certificates and degrees of all kinds are within the reach of students who, because of time, geographical, or other constraints, cannot come to campus.

According to a frequently cited report by the Sloan Consortium (2006) on the state of online learning, in fall 2006 almost 3.5 million, or 20 percent of all college students, were taking at least one class online, a nearly 10 percent increase over the previous year. That growth rate in online enrollments far exceeds the 1.5 percent overall growth of the college student population. Furthermore, the growth rate is especially concentrated at two-year institutions, which account for more than one-half of all online enrollments for the last five years (Sloan Consortium 2007).

Indeed, some of you may be reading this or another textbook as part of an online course. While you may never be in the physical presence of your professor or fellow students, you can interact with them online, use electronic bulletin boards or chat rooms for class discussions, and get feedback on your work by e-mail. As with any application of technology to education, there may be both pros and cons. Like the old-fashioned correspondence courses, online technologies provide educational access for those who might otherwise not be able to pursue a degree. However, distance learning sometimes lacks the personal touch and dynamic interaction of standard classroom instruction. For this reason, students may feel that there is something important (if intangible) missing from their educational experience. Since you will probably experience both traditional and online learning in your college career, ultimately you'll be the judge.

distance learning any educational course or program in which the teacher and the students do not meet together in the classroom; increasingly available over the internet

Education: Linking Micro- and Macrosociology

As societies change, so do educational institutions, and so does the individual's experience of education. For example, you likely enroll in your courses online, but before the advent of the internet, you might have had to enroll by phone or even stand in line at the registrar's office and sign up for classes in person. This is one of the many ways that macro-level change (in this case, the development of internet technology) affects your everyday life through your participation in the social institution of education. What you learn about the world in school on an everyday basis—as well as how you learn it—is shaped by larger social forces such as politics and religion.

Education is not the only social institution concerned with teaching members of society important information, values, and norms. Religion is another social institution from which we learn a great deal about being members of society. Even if we rebel against our religious upbringing or have no religious affiliation, our lives are touched in important ways by religion because it is a dominant social institution. As you read the following section, think about the intersection of the micro and the macro in the study of religion and about the intersection of religion with other social institutions, including politics and education.

What Is Religion?

No doubt we each have our own definition of religion based on personal experience. But a sociological definition must be broad enough to encompass all kinds of religious experience. For sociologists, **religion** includes any institutionalized system of shared **beliefs** (propositions and ideas held on the basis of faith) and **rituals** (practices based on those beliefs) that identify a relationship between the **sacred** (holy, divine, or supernatural) and the **profane** (ordinary, mundane, or everyday). Those who study religion recognize that there are different types of religious groups: denominations (major subgroups of larger religions, such as Protestantism within Christianity or Shia within Islam), sects (smaller subgroups such as the Amish or Mennonites), and cults (usually very small, intense, close-knit groups focused on individual leaders—like David Koresh and the Branch Davidians—or specific issues like the UFO cult Heaven's Gate). Sociologists do not evaluate the truth of any system of beliefs; they study the ways that religions shape and are shaped by cultural institutions and processes, as well as the ways that religions influence and are influenced by the behavior of individuals.

religion any institutionalized system of shared beliefs and rituals that identify a relationship between the sacred and the profane

belief a proposition or idea held on the basis of faith

ritual a practice based on religious beliefs

sacred the holy, divine, or supernatural

profane the ordinary, mundane, or everyday

monotheistic a term describing religions that worship a single divine figure

Functions and Dysfunctions of Religion

For members of any religion, beliefs and rituals serve a number of functions. First, religion shapes everyday behavior by providing morals, values, rules, and norms for its participants. From the Judeo-Christian commandment "Thou shall not kill" to the Buddhist commitment to reconcile strife to the Qur'anic requirement to eschew alcohol and impure foods, religious rules govern both the largest and smallest events and actions of followers' daily lives. Religious practices usually include some type of penance or rehabilitation for those who break the rules: Catholics can confess their sins to a priest and be assigned prayer or good works to redeem themselves; Muslims spend the month of Ramadan fasting during daylight hours to purify their bodies and souls; Yom Kippur is the Jewish Day of Atonement and also involves fasting, as well as appeals for wrongs to be forgiven.

Another function of religion is to give meaning to our lives. Religious beliefs can help us understand just about everything we encounter because every religion has a system of beliefs that explains the fundamental questions. How did we get here? What is our purpose in life? Why do bad things happen to good people? All religious traditions address these questions, helping their followers explain the inexplicable, making the terrible more tolerable, and assuring believers that there is a larger plan. Finally, religion provides the opportunity to come together with others—to share in group activity and identity, to form cohesive social organizations, and to be part of a congregation of like-minded others.

These are the (mostly unifying) functions of religion for individuals and for society, but there are also ways in which religion can promote inequality, conflict, and change. From a conflict perspective, the doctrines of the three major **monotheistic** religions—religions that worship one divine figure (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)—are quite sexist. Orthodox Judaism mandates the separation of men and women in worship and in everyday life; Catholicism and many Protestant sects prohibit women from becoming priests

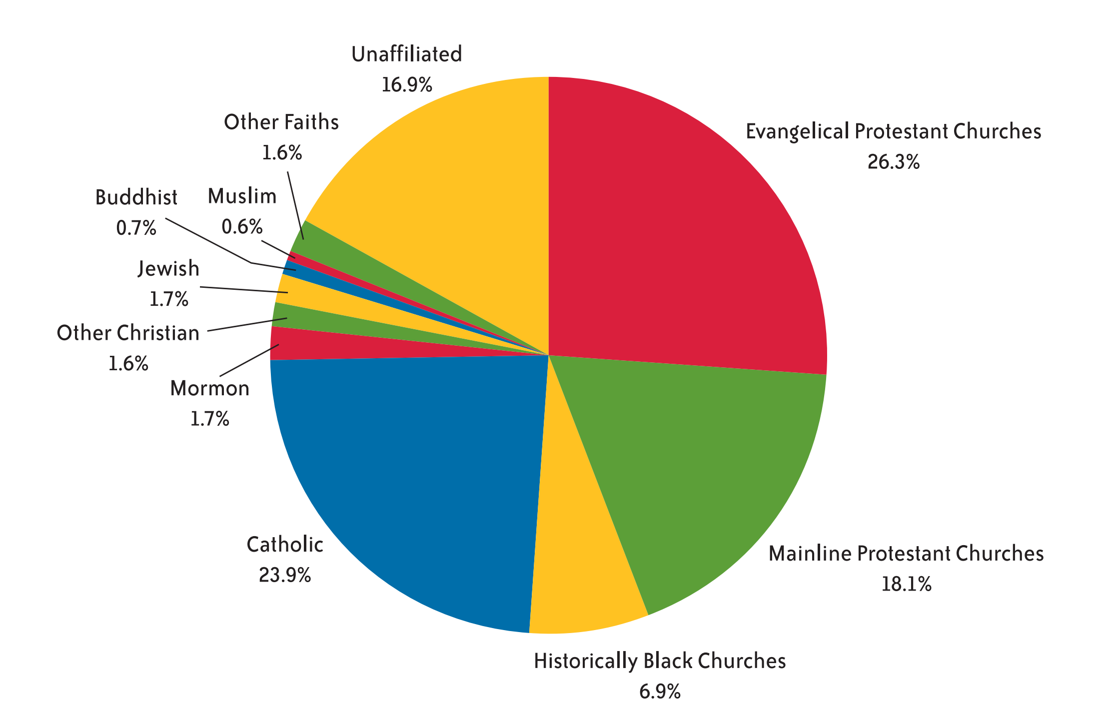


FIGURE 11.2 Religious Composition of the United States

SOURCE: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008

or pastors; traditional, observant Muslim women must keep their bodies completely covered at all times. There are very few nonsexist religions, and those with strongly nonsexist values and practices (such as Wicca) are usually marginalized. Some religions have antihomosexual or racist doctrines as well—some Protestant sects refuse to ordain gay clergy, and until 1978 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) believed that people with dark skin were cursed by God and forbade African Americans from marrying in the temple.

Religious organizations have also been agents of social justice and political change. For example, religion has been closely linked to movements for African American rights. The movement for the abolition of slavery was entwined with Christian reformers like the Methodists and Baptists. The Civil Rights Movement in the twentieth century began in southern Protestant churches and was led by a team of Christian ministers, including the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. In Africa and Latin America, **liberation theology** has been instrumental in fighting exploitation, oppression, and poverty—Archbishop Óscar Romero of El Salvador used this distinctive combination of Marxism and Christianity to argue against the country's repressive military dictatorship. Though Romero was assassinated while saying mass in 1980, his legacy lives on in human rights movements all over the world. The Polish labor movement Solidarność, led by Catholic shipyard workers in Gdansk and supported by the late Pope John Paul II, was the crucible for democratic change in the Eastern bloc in the 1980s. Communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe had restricted religious freedom and labor union organizing for decades—Solidarność helped break down both of those barriers.

From a conflict perspective, then, religion is complex: it can subjugate and oppress at the same time it can liberate. This may help explain Americans' seemingly contradictory approach to religion. While quasi-religious principles are at the core of many of our closely held national ideologies, many Americans also believe that religion should be kept separate from our collective political life.

Religion in America

How religious is the American public? That depends on the measures used (Hill and Wood 1999). Sociologists usually define **religiosity** as the consistent and regular practice of religious beliefs and gauge religiosity in terms of frequency of attendance at worship services and the importance of religious beliefs to an individual (see the next Data Workshop for more detailed measures of religiosity). One study found that 56 percent of Americans

liberation theology a movement within the Catholic church to understand Christianity from the perspective of the poor and oppressed, with a focus on fighting injustice

religiosity the regular practice of religious beliefs, often measured in terms of frequency of attendance at worship services and the importance of religious beliefs to an individual



Religion and Social Justice Óscar Romero, Archbishop of El Salvador (left), and Lech Walesa (right, speaking into a bullhorn) of Poland both led movements against repressive political regimes.

say religion is very important to them and that on average, 39 percent of Americans say they go to religious services at least once a week (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008). This second number is somewhat misleading, however, because there are big differences in religious participation across demographic groups. Gender, age, geographic region, political party, and religious affiliation are all variables that influence attendance.



DATA WORKSHOP

ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Measures of Religiosity

The term *religiosity* refers to the extent of a person's commitment to a religion. Researchers have identified two broad categories of religiosity: extrinsic and intrinsic (Allport and Ross 1967). **Extrinsic religiosity** refers to a person's public display of commitment, such as attendance at religious services or activities at other related functions. **Intrinsic religiosity** refers to a person's inner religious life or personal relationship to the divine.

This Data Workshop asks you to examine the role of religion in everyday life by measuring religiosity in a sample of research participants. The data can be collected using either interview or survey methods.

extrinsic religiosity a person's public display of commitment to a religious faith

intrinsic religiosity a person's inner religious life or personal relationship to the divine

In each case, choose a population for the research, construct a good questionnaire or instrument, administer it to your sample respondents, and analyze the findings. In choosing a population, consider such variables as race and ethnicity, class, national background, gender, and/or age for your sample. Researchers have documented variations of religiosity across different social groups. There are many possibilities for comparing and contrasting within or across categories.

With an interview, decide whether it will be closed- or open-ended and how many questions you must have to gather sufficient data. This will help you determine how many people you will need to interview (for the formal option, we suggest at least three to five respondents). With a survey, the number of respondents will also depend on the length of the questionnaire (for the formal option, we suggest at least six to eight respondents). Remember that your questions will need to be structured according to the principles of survey research, by providing a set of possible answers for the respondents.

Questions about religious affiliation, membership, and attendance at services can tell you something about an individual's level of commitment, but there are many other ways you can measure religiosity, both extrinsic and intrinsic. You can create questions that measure people's concrete practice of religion and their abstract sense of what religion means to them. Regardless of whether you do an interview or survey, you can choose from the following list of questions (adapted from Lewis et al. 2001). You will need to modify the wording of these questions or add questions for either an interview guide or a survey questionnaire.

- Are you affiliated with any religion?
- Are you affiliated with any particular sect or denomination?
- Do you belong to a church, synagogue, temple, or other place of worship?
- How often do you attend religious services?

- Do you participate in other church-related activities?
- How often do you read or study sacred texts or scripture?
- How often do you pray or meditate or engage in some other religious practice?
- How important is your relationship with God [or another religious figure]?
- To what extent is your religious faith important to you?
- To what extent do you consider your religious faith to be an important part of who you are as a person?
- Do you look to your faith as a source of comfort?
- Do you look to your faith as a source of inspiration?
- Do you look to your faith as providing meaning, direction, or purpose in your life?
- Does your faith impact your relationships with other people?
- Does your faith impact your decisions in regard to family, friends, work, school, or other aspects of your life?
- How has your commitment to your religion changed over time?

After gathering data through interviews or surveys, describe and analyze your findings. See what kinds of patterns you can find—similarities, differences, comparisons, and contradictions. How do your findings confirm or refute any hypotheses you might have had before beginning the study? What do you think these data reveal about the role of religion in your subjects' lives? About the role of religion in society?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Conduct interviews or administer surveys with a small sample of your population. Prepare written notes that you can refer to in class. Discuss your findings with other students in small-group discussions. Note the similarities and differences in your findings and those of your group members. Write a statement that identifies and incorporates the patterns found in the data gathered by the entire group.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Conduct interviews or administer surveys to your sample following the suggested questions above. Write a two- to three-page essay describing and analyzing your findings, attaching any notes or transcripts to your paper.

Religious Affiliation Trends

A slim majority of Americans maintain the same religious affiliation throughout their lifetimes (56 percent according to a 2008 Survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life), but there have been shifts in religious preferences in the last few decades. One of those trends is toward fundamentalism, which is not a religion in itself but a traditionalist approach that can be applied to any religion. Another trend is away from organized churches, toward an "unchurched" spirituality that borrows elements from many traditions but is affiliated with none.

FUNDAMENTALISM Fundamentalist approaches to religious belief and practice are on the rise both worldwide and in the United States. **Fundamentalism** is a way of understanding and interpreting sacred texts that can be part of any denomination or sect. Fundamentalist Christianity, for example, centers on a strict, sometimes literal, interpretation of the Bible and advocates a return to the historic founding principles of Christianity, arguing that modern approaches to Christianity are corrupt and inauthentic. Other religions have fundamentalist strains as well. Orthodox Judaism, for example, promotes a literal reading of the Torah and other Jewish spiritual and legal tracts. Fundamentalist Islam parallels Jewish and Christian fundamentalisms in that it also requires strict, literal, and traditional interpretations of the Qur'an and other sacred texts. Fundamentalist approaches to all three of these major religions gained popularity in response to the complex social changes of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States and around the world (Patterson 2004) because fundamentalism provides a return to tradition and to simple, unambiguous values and ideologies. Declaring one's loyalty to a traditional religious group that promises certainty in the face of change may be comforting to individuals—but it has broader social and political consequences as well.

Between 1990 and 2001, the number of Americans who describe themselves as "Fundamentalist Christians" tripled, and the number describing themselves as "Evangelical Christians" (a variant of fundamentalist groups) more than quadrupled (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001). With the rapidly increasing popularity of these groups, their beliefs have also spilled over into other areas of social life. Some fundamentalists also take an **evangelical** approach, attempting to convert individuals to their way of worshipping. Evangelicals

fundamentalism the practice of emphasizing literal interpretation of texts and a "return" to a time of greater religious purity; represented by the most conservative group within any religion

evangelical a term describing conservative Christians who emphasize converting others to their faith



Megachurches Rick Warren, the senior pastor of Saddleback Church and author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, preaches to his congregation. Because his church attracts 20,000 parishioners on an average Sunday, Warren shows his sermons on video screens inside the church.

see their conversion work as a service to others—an attempt to save souls—and have adapted many modern technologies (including television and the internet) to their cause.

UNCHURCHED SPIRITUALITY About 14 percent of Americans claim no religious affiliation (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001)—interestingly, this group is more likely to be younger and to live in western states such as California, Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico. Having no religious affiliation, however, does not necessarily mean they are "unbelievers." In fact, fewer than 1 percent describe themselves as atheists. As yet another indicator of our paradoxical attitudes about religion, Americans are increasingly seeking guidance and fulfillment through nontraditional means, with many labeling themselves "spiritual but not religious." This trend involves new definitions of belief and practice, often expressed privately and individually rather than in organized group settings. As noted above, some organized religions still include elements of sexism, racial prejudice, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and conformity that turn people off, and so spiritual seekers may utilize a kind of "cafeteria" strategy, choosing elements from various traditions and weaving them together into something unique. This type of **unchurched** spirituality (Fuller 2002), frowned upon by some religious organizations, is becoming increasingly popular, as spiritual seekers mix bits of astrology, alternative healing, twelve-step programs, and even witchcraft with elements of more traditional doctrines.

unchurched a term describing those who consider themselves spiritual but not religious and who often adopt aspects of various religious traditions

secular nonreligious; a secular society separates church and state and does not endorse any religion

A Secular Society?

The separation of church and state is a time-honored (and controversial) American principle, established by the founders to preserve freedom of religion—one of the main reasons Europeans came to North America. As important and central as this principle is to American politics, we haven't always been able to maintain it in practice. Consider the dollar bill with the legend "In God We Trust." Witness the 2003 controversy about displaying the Ten Commandments in public buildings in Alabama, or President George W. Bush's allocation of federal monies to "faith-based" charitable organizations. Even the school voucher debate centers around this issue: should public education funds be used to send children to private schools, many of which are religious? And of course specifically Christian values and practices shape the everyday life of all Americans—Christian or not. Whether we are a **secular** society, one that separates church and state, is a complicated issue.



Separation of Church and State? This portrait of Jesus has hung in the main hallway of Bridgeport High School, a public school in Bridgeport, West Virginia, for more than three decades. In 2006, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit to have the portrait removed.



Can We Have a Relationship with God?

Sociologists usually don't address questions like "Is there a God?" as these are not questions to which empirical, scientific methods can be applied. It is impossible to prove that God exists (at least by the rules of the scientific method)—and it is equally impossible to prove that God doesn't exist.

Social scientists don't have to answer the question of any god's existence to study the relationships people have with their particular deity. Those who believe in God may talk about that belief in terms usually used to describe interpersonal relationships. For instance, they may talk about speaking with God or having a conversation with God. Since sociology is, at one level, the study of various types of relationships, sociologists are interested in people's perceptions of their bonds with the divine. John Caughey, a professor of American Studies, specializes in studying these relationships and argues that relationships with a god or gods (or, depending on the culture, spirits, saints, or dead ancestors) are necessary to participate in many cultures. In other words, in most cultures we are actually required to be able to carry on such relationships in order to seem normal (Caughey 1984, 1999).

Practices such as prayer, in which individuals speak directly to God, saints, or spirits, are ways of establishing relationships with these entities. Only in very unusual cases do individuals claim that a god or saint has spoken directly to them in anything resembling face-to-face interaction. Instead, we tend to look for the entity's response to our prayers in various sorts of signs. If we have appealed to God to intervene in a particular situation (to help us do well on an exam or to improve the health of a sick relative), we often see God's "reply" in seemingly unrelated places—for example, the parting of the clouds to reveal a sunny sky just as we set off to the lecture hall or hospital. The number of times that the image of Jesus, Mary, or some other Christian figure has been seen in a rock formation, a pane of window glass, or even a malformed tortilla should indicate how hungry we are for tangible, concrete reciprocity in these faith-based relationships.

So, can you have a relationship with God? Of course you can—if you believe. Sociologists will never be able to confirm or deny the existence of any deity; what we are interested in, ultimately, is the role that these faith-based relationships play in our everyday social lives.

In both government and private industry, schedules are organized around Christian holidays with little or no attention paid to religious holidays of other groups. Schools, banks, and government employers are all closed on Christmas Day, even though this holiday is not observed by more than 15 percent of Americans. Your university's system of vacation periods is likely organized around both Christmas and Easter—important Christian holidays. Universities rarely give days off for Yom Kippur or Passover, two very important Jewish holidays. This means that Jewish students and staff who observe these holidays must go through the hassle of making special arrangements to compensate for classes or meetings missed. They may have to use valuable vacation or sick time or even forfeit credit for exams given on that day. Eid al Fitr, the last day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, calls for a variety of special celebrations that schools and employers rarely recognize; those who wish to observe this holiday must make their own arrangements as well.

RELIGION IN THE WHITE HOUSE The only official eligibility requirements for the job of U.S. president are that the person be 35 years old, a natural-born U.S. citizen, and a resident in the United States for at least 14 years. There is no requirement that the president be a man, though all of them have been, or a Christian, but all of them have been. It seems that an unspoken requirement for the presidency includes being a man of Christian faith, with Protestant Christianity being preferred. The only Catholic to hold the office—John F. Kennedy—endured a storm of controversy

Global Perspective

Thou Shall Not Kill: Religion, Violence, and Terrorism

The history of religious conflict is extensive and convoluted, having been around for as long as humans have worshipped gods. No faith is exempt, and religion has played a significant role in conflicts from the ancient Israelites and Canaanites around 1200 B.C.E. to Al-Qaeda's destruction of New York City's World Trade Center in 2001 to Sri Lanka's civil war between the Hindu Tamil Tigers and the Buddhist Sinhalese in which over 50,000 lives were lost.

Mark Juergensmeyer's book *Terror in the Mind of God* (2003) analyzes the history and meaning of religious violence in general and terrorism in particular. He notes that groups using terror have historically had diverse agendas and motivations, but only within the last 30 years has religion has come to play a prominent role in terrorist violence:

> In 1980 the U.S. State Department roster of international terrorist groups listed scarcely a single religious organization. In 1998 U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright listed thirty of the world's most dangerous groups; over half were religious. They were Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist. If one added to this list other violent religious groups around the world, including the many Christian militia and other paramilitary organizations found domestically in the United States, the number of religious terrorist groups would be considerable. (Juergensmeyer 2003, p. 6)

Juergensmeyer uses several examples to illustrate the cross-cultural similarities of religious violence. Within the Christian tradition he discusses a wide range of examples, from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland to the killing of doctors who perform abortions in the United States. Within Judaism he examined the case of Baruch Goldstein, who killed 28 Muslims in 1994 when he opened fire in the Ibrahim Mosque in the Cave of the Patriarchs, a shrine holy to both Jews and Muslims. Juergensmeyer also investigated Islamic terrorism such as the first attempt to bomb the World Trade Center in 1993 and the activities of the Palestinian group Hamas, which pioneered the use of suicide bombings in the Middle East. Sikh terrorists were responsible for the assassinations of Indira Gandhi and Beant Singh, and a Buddhist Japanese cult, Aum Shinrikyo, launched the notorious sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway.

Juergensmeyer argues that the common thread linking religious violence in such disparate traditions and far-flung

during his 1960 campaign, when critics feared that America would be ruled by the Pope if Kennedy was elected. As late as the month of October during the 2008 presidential campaign, a persistent 12 percent of Americans continued to believe that Barack Obama was a Muslim, a rumor that may have derived from his middle name "Hussein," despite his clear affiliation as a Christian (Pew Research Center 2008a). Indeed, Obama's Christianity took center stage at one point during the campaign when he had to address the controversial comments of his pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright. The Obamas eventually left Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ in order to distance themselves from Reverend Wright, but not until after Wright's divisive sermons began to interfere publicly with the candidate's campaign. Given America's explicit constitutional commitment to the separation of church and state, it seems we shouldn't be concerned about a president's religious affiliation (or lack thereof). But it matters.



Religion and the White House President Barack Obama prays alongside churchgoers during a Sunday-morning service at the Harvest Cathedral Chapel in Macon, Georgia.



Terror in the Mind of God Shoko Asahara (left) was the leader of a Japanese Buddhist cult, Aum Shinrikyo, whose 1995 nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway killed 27 people and injured thousands. The Provisional IRA (right), which emerged in 1969, sees itself as a continuation of the Irish Republican Army, which fought in the Irish War of Independence. Through bombings and other attacks, the IRA has tried to unite Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland.

corners of the world is a reliance on a particular kind of religious perspective. "The social tensions of this moment of history . . . cry out for absolute solutions," he says, and in a world that seems increasingly beyond individual control, religious violence offers a way to reassert some kind of power.

The list of wars, conflicts, and terrorist acts inspired or justified by religion is tragically long, extending throughout history and reaching across continents. Religious conflict is not a thing of the past, nor is your country (or your religion, whatever it may be) untouched by it.

The administration of George W. Bush was particularly notable for the controversy it stirred over the influence of religion on the leader of the free world. President Bush was famously quoted by former aide David Frum as saying that "I had a drinking problem . . . [and] there is only one reason I am in the Oval Office and not in a bar. I found faith. I found God" (Goodstein 2004). Bush managed, to some degree, to placate opponents concerned with the separation between church and state. His public comments on the subject were consistently conciliatory and inclusive. In his first press conference after winning reelection in 2004, Bush was asked by a reporter, "What do you say to those who are concerned about the role of a faith they do not share in public life and in your policies?" (Noah 2004). The president answered:

> I will be your President regardless of your faith, and I don't expect you to agree with me necessarily on religion. As a matter of fact, no President should ever try to impose religion on our society. A great—the great tradition of America is one where people can worship the way they want to worship. And if they choose not to worship, they're just as patriotic as your neighbor. That is an essential part of why we are a great nation. (Noah 2004)

Bush is one of many presidents who were advised by the unofficial White House chaplain, the Reverend Billy Graham. Graham advised every president since Dwight D. Eisenhower up through George W. Bush on matters of state and personal spirituality. With a man of the cloth as such a high-profile presidential advisor, and with Christianity as an unstated requirement for holding presidential office, are we really a secular society? Are church and state truly separate? Is every person equally free to practice his or her faith in American society?

Religion: Linking Micro- and Macrosociology

Religion is the source of conflict and misunderstanding but also a wellspring of comfort and meaning for many. Whether you are Catholic or Methodist, Orthodox or Reform Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist, Mormon or Wiccan or Scientologist, you share common experiences with others in the practice of your religion, no matter how different your belief systems and rituals may be. A sense of meaning, a set of rules and guidelines by which to live your life, a way of explaining the world around you, a feeling of belonging and group identity—sociologists recognize these patterns across religious traditions.

Religion is yet another social institution that helps us see the link between macro-level social structure and micro-level everyday experience. Religious beliefs, practices, and prejudices can inflame global conflicts and resolve them and can shape national political life in observable and unexamined ways. At the same time, religion is integral in the everyday lives of many Americans who find comfort and kinship in their religious beliefs and practices. "In God We Trust" is the motto for both our nation and many of its people, no matter what their faith.

Closing Comments

All three of the social institutions examined in this chapter—politics, education, and religion—are part of the structure of our society, and they are linked in a variety of ways. For example, state and federal policy decisions about school vouchers affect individual students and neighborhood public schools, and they benefit parochial schools and the religious institutions that run them. Politics, education, religion, and other social institutions influence your everyday lives in ways you may not have realized. We hope you have gained greater awareness of how these social institutions shape your life as a member of society—and how you can influence them as well. Your vote changes the political landscape; your role as a student influences the culture of your college and university; your membership in a religious congregation affects the lives of your fellow worshippers. Institutions impact individuals, but individuals can influence institutions as well—this is the essence of the sociological imagination and the macro-micro link.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Politics, education, and religion are all institutions that function at the macro level to shape our everyday lives, but they are created and sustained through micro-level interactions. There are large areas of overlap among the three where moral values, political practicalities, and educational expectations intersect.
- **Political Systems: Government** *Politics* describes the methods of managing a political entity as well as the actions of citizens and groups. In the distribution of power, authoritarian governments involve a small number of people monopolizing the mechanisms of power. Monarchies, whether absolute or constitutional, pass power and authority down through the family. Democratic systems allow their citizens to take part in their own government, but they must specify who is a citizen.
- **The American Political System** Since American democracy vests the power to vote in so many people, it is important to follow the trail of power, based on who votes, interest groups, and the influence of the mass media. Despite controversy about how to count voter turnout, many worry that fewer eligible voters vote in this country than in other democracies.
- **Who Rules America?** Some argue that our political system is pluralistic and that a wide variety of individuals and groups provide checks and balances for each other. However, C. Wright Mills claimed that America is controlled by a power elite—a small number of people who occupy the top positions in our economic, political, and military institutions. They are few—possibly fewer than 6,000—and they all know each other, forming

something like a "members only" club helping to ensure that power won't change hands.

- Many worry about the role of money in politics, especially the difficulty of winning an election without being the top spender. Special interest groups, PACs, and 527 committees all spend money to influence elections, and many are concerned about the power this gives them.

- **The Media and the Political Process** The free press was very important to the drafters of the Constitution; as the Fourth Estate, the media continue to serve as another of the checks and balances on power. The drafters may not have been able to conceive of how the media would eventually influence the political process, especially in campaigns and elections. While the media have the potential to bring us more information about candidates and issues, too often they focus on surface perceptions to the detriment of substantive debate. New media and the internet are sure to further impact the political process.

- **A Brief History of Modern Education** Society transmits its knowledge, values, and expectations to its members through education and increasingly uses formal education, outside the home, to impart the knowledge necessary for effective social functioning. The earliest record of education is from ancient Greece, and for a long time after, in Europe at least, the church was the main source of education. Not until the Enlightenment did modern, secular education begin to emerge.

- **Education and the Reproduction of Society** Education can be either the key to success or an important way to reproduce inequality. Schools are designed to train new workers, not through the official curriculum but through a hidden curriculum of "rules, routines, and regulations" that produces a submissive and obedient workforce well practiced at taking orders and performing repetitive tasks. What schools teach and how they teach it are closely related; when we change the substantive content but not the method of teaching that content, students continue to learn from the hidden curriculum.

- **Classic Studies of Education** Rosenthal and Jacobson's symbolic interactionist study of education suggested that even things we assume to be objective, like IQ scores, can be affected by interaction. Jonathan Kozol's ethnography, *Savage Inequalities*, documented the massive disparities in school funding and their impact on children. Randall Collins examined the function served by our current education system and concluded that it serves to keep down the number of job applicants in professional fields and to ensure a large population forced to work unpleasant jobs at low wages.

- **The Present and Future of Education** Many believe that America's educational system is in crisis, though there is little agreement over how to fix the problem. One solution is the "No Child Left Behind" Act, which holds schools and teachers accountable for students who perform poorly on standardized tests. Another is to change the structure of schools, using charter schools, early college high schools, homeschooling, school vouchers, community colleges, and distance learning.

- **What Is Religion?** Religion is any organized system of beliefs and rituals with respect to the sacred and the profane. Religion gives meaning to our lives and provides opportunities to form cohesive groups and learn the morals, norms, and values that shape everyday life. But religion can also be dysfunctional, promoting inequality with sexist, racist, and homophobic doctrines.

- **Religion in America** With religiosity measured by church attendance, 38 percent of Americans report attending services weekly. In recent decades the number of people who identify themselves as both unchurched and fundamentalist has dramatically increased. Although separation of church and state is an important political tradition in this country, there are questions about the extent to which we are a secular society.

- **Linking Micro and Macro Perspectives** The political institutions that powerfully shape our everyday lives are created only through individuals' participation in the democratic process. Education is another key area in which macro-level changes directly affect daily life, especially for young people. What you learn and how you learn are shaped by social forces including the influences of politics and religion. Like politics and education, religion links the micro with the macro, in that the teachings of large-scale social structures influence—and may collide with—intimate personal beliefs.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Were you eligible to vote in the last election? If so, did you? If you didn't vote, why not? The voting rates for voting-eligible U.S. citizens aged 18 to 24 are much lower than those for senior citizens; why do you think that is?

2. If America really is ruled by a tiny power elite, what does this mean for the American rags-to-riches mythology that says anyone who works hard can get to the top? Whose interests are served by such a mythology?
3. Many sociologists believe that public opinion is shaped by opinion leaders, high-profile people who interpret political information for us. Are you aware of any celebrities who have taken a stand on political or social issues? Do such people affect your opinions?
4. This chapter opened with a discussion of the Pledge of Allegiance. Given what you learned about the hidden curriculum, what sort of implicit lessons do you think are being taught when students say the pledge?
5. Much of this chapter's discussion of education focused on elementary and high schools. Do you think the same theories apply to college classrooms? Have you experienced a hidden curriculum since you left high school?
6. What does Randall Collins say about the true function of education? If you want to stop the class system from automatically reproducing itself, what steps could you take?
7. Is religion really just beliefs and rituals about the sacred and the profane? What does the religious tradition you're most familiar with consider sacred and profane?
8. There is some debate over how to measure religiosity: Should it be based on how spiritual you feel or how often you attend religious services? Which way do you think is more valid? Why? Can you think of a better way than either of these?
9. Mark Juergensmeyer believes that the common thread linking religious violence in radically different religious traditions is a particular kind of religious perspective: a need for absolutes. Why does he think this need is being expressed in our time? Do you agree?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Bellah, Robert, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton. 1985. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press. The authors explore the social significance of religiosity in America.

Berger, Peter L. 1970. *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*. Garden City, NJ: Anchor. One of the principal figures within symbolic interactionism gives his views about religion in an increasingly secular world.

Covington, Dennis. 1995. *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake-Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley. Covington provides a close look at a particularly conservative form of Christianity, whose members handle snakes, speak in tongues, and remain profoundly alienated from the secular world.

High School. 1968. Dir. Frederick Wiseman. Osti Productions. This documentary was shot in Philadelphia's Northeast High School in the late 1960s when teachers and administrators seemed to value discipline above all other virtues. The National Film Preservation Board selected it for inclusion in the National Film Registry.

Jesus Camp. 2006. An Academy Award–nominated documentary that focuses on three devoutly religious kids who attend a charismatic Christian summer camp. Most of the campers are also homeschooled because of their parents' concerns about what is taught in a public curriculum. Follows the children at camp as well as in their local churches and homes.

Kapuscinski, Ryszard. 1989. *The Emperor*. New York: Vintage. An account of the fall of Haile Selassie, His Most Puissant Majesty and Distinguished Highness the Emperor of Ethiopia, who ruled from 1930 until he was overthrown by the army in 1974. The author interviews many of the emperor's servants and associates to describe a living, twentieth-century monarch and his final days in power.

Moore, Barrington. 1993. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston: Beacon Press. An examination of the social and economic factors that influence the development of particular political modes.

Orenstein, Peggy. 1994. *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap*. New York: Doubleday. Orenstein's engaging overview of the research on gender bias in education puts a human face on the quantitative research in this area.

School, the Story of American Public Education. 2001. Dir. Sarah Mondale. A four-part PBS series chronicling the history of American public education from the late 1770s to the present, this film explains the deeply rooted connections between American education and democracy. Also check the website: www.pbs.org/kcet/publicschool.

The War Room. 1993. Dir. D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus. McEttinger Films. An excellent primer on how media forces interact with politics. This documentary about Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign combines behind-the-scenes footage with news clips to show the connections between political gamesmanship and media coverage.



CHAPTER 12

The Economy, Work, and Working

The history of one family's jobs and careers can provide some insight into the sociological development of work and the economy over time. For example, Dr. Ferris's great-grandfathers included a military man in Missouri, a tailor in Texas, and a stonemason and a butcher, both in a tiny mountain village in Lebanon. Despite their geographical and cultural distance from one another, they all were involved in occupations that have existed since ancient times and were still common in the late nineteenth century. Their various jobs represent much of the range of possible jobs in agricultural societies. Some people were skilled craftsmen, some were soldiers, and most others farmed. While women sometimes helped with the farming or other types of work, their primary task was homemaking and child rearing—and this was what all of Ferris's great-grandmothers did, serving as helpmates to their husbands and caregivers to their children.

Moving up a generation in the family tree, you can see that in the first half of the twentieth century, Ferris's grandparents were involved in military and service work, with some industrial labor experience as well. One grandfather emigrated from Lebanon to Massachusetts, where he worked in the local brass foundry. This kind of hard physical labor in a stiflingly hot factory setting was the norm during the industrial era. While he worked at the foundry, his wife secretly worked at a local laundry, hiding her earnings from him. When he discovered her deception, he was angry, as he felt that women shouldn't work outside the home. However, these secret earnings later helped them afford to take a step up in the occupational hierarchy: they bought a restaurant and ran it successfully. Ferris's other grandfather was an Army doctor who was stationed all over the United States and the world. His wife followed, making a home with the children wherever they were stationed. She served as a hostess and provided crucial support for her husband's career, which was customary in the early twentieth century.

By the time Ferris's parents started working in the second half of the twentieth century, her mother was part of a new generation of women who were far more likely than their own mothers had been to pursue a college education and a career outside the home, even while raising children. Both of Ferris's parents earned advanced

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Then and Now

Thirteenth Century: Average number of hours worked annually by an adult male laborer in the United Kingdom: 1,620

Twenty-first Century: Average number of hours worked annually by an adult male laborer in the United Kingdom: 1,673

Here and There

United States: Average number of vacation days taken by workers in 2005: 13

Italy: Average number of vacation days taken by workers in 2005: 42

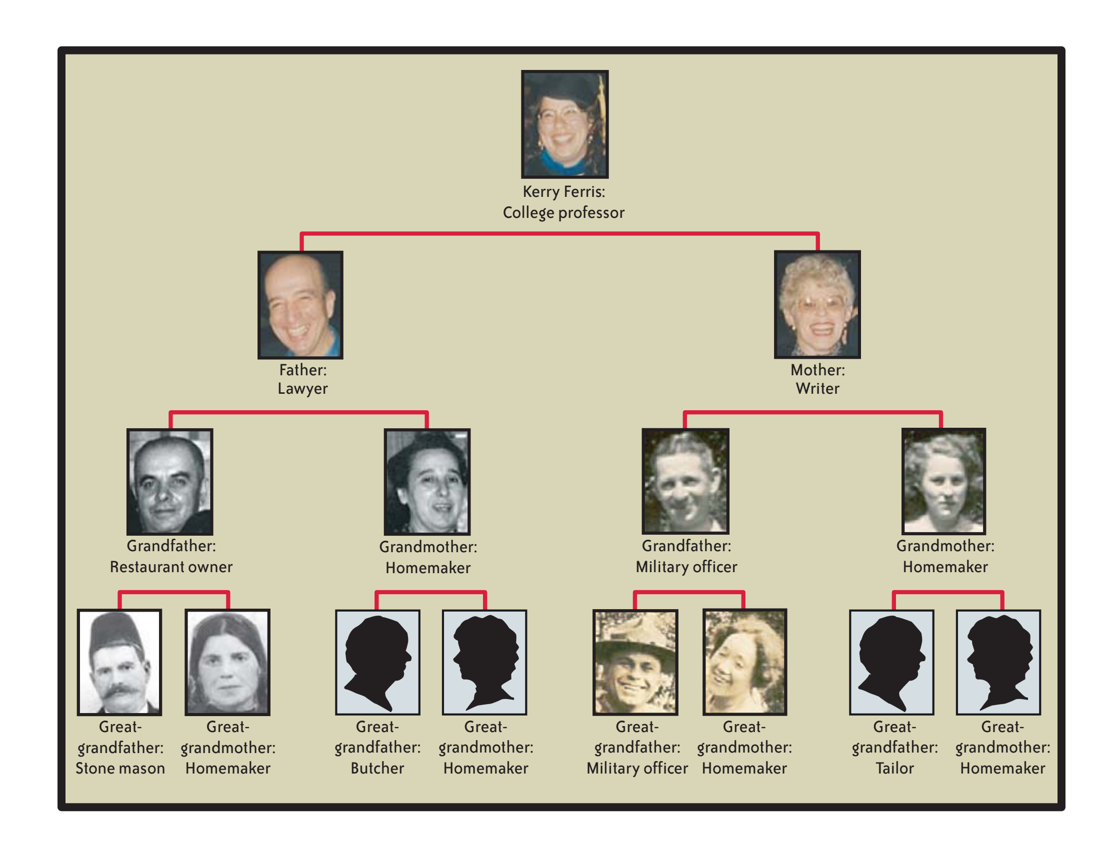
This and That

Percentage of the U.S. population formally employed in 2008: 66%

Percentage of the U.S. population working in the informal economy (street vending, bartering, trading, itinerant or seasonal work, odd jobs, and "under the table" work) in 2008: 8–10%

degrees (mom an MA and dad a JD); as a writer and an attorney, respectively, they both engage in service- and knowledge-based work. These areas experienced tremendous growth as the country moved into a postindustrial, Information-Age economy. Dr. Ferris, as a professor with a PhD, is also a knowledge-worker—still just two generations away from great-grandparents without formal educations. Because of historical changes in gendered career expectations, she has enjoyed opportunities her grandmothers and great-grandmothers could never have imagined. And as we move into the twenty-first century, developments in the economic and occupational landscape are likely to create a world in which the next generation of the Ferris family may hold jobs that have not even been invented yet—perhaps in an entirely new, currently unimagined field.

Your own occupational family tree probably holds similar insights into the development of both world and U.S. economic systems over time. And this is no accident—as different as our families and their experiences may be, the patterns and trends in the kinds of work our relatives did can be a rich topic for sociological analysis. Our individual occupational choices are always made within the context of larger economic and social structures, both local and global. In this chapter, we will examine those structures and the experiences of individuals within them.



Kerry Ferris's Occupational Family Tree

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

After reading this chapter, you should understand why work is a classic topic of sociological inquiry: it is a fulcrum point between the micro and the macro and a link between the individual and the social. You will see the connection between the everyday conditions of your life on the job and the larger structural changes related to history, technology, and the economic system in which you work. We want you to become familiar with the classic and more recent sociological studies in this area and how they have shaped our ways of thinking about the social world of economy and work. You will know something about the past and perhaps have more insight about the future and your place in it.

An economy deals not only with money but also with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services within a society. In this chapter we look at issues regarding the economy, focusing specifically on work, because the economy shapes the types of work available as well as our patterns of working.

Historical and Economic Changes

We start with the history of U.S. economies, paying special attention to the agricultural, industrial, and postindustrial periods—and how new technologies have changed the nature of work in each of these periods.

Pre-Colonial United States: Hunting and Gathering and Horticultural Societies

Perhaps the earliest form of economy in the Americas was in pre-sixteenth-century Native American societies. An estimated 2 million to 10 million tribal people inhabited the continent prior to colonization by Europeans. Some were hunting and gathering societies, which had to be highly mobile, relocating for food and weather conditions. The division of labor revolved around survival, with the men hunting animals or foraging for plant sources of food. The women, children, and elderly cooked, sewed, and did other tasks at the campsite. Horticultural societies were different in that they were based on the domestication of animals, farming, and generating a surplus of resources. They had more



Slaves at Work in the Field The southern agricultural economy depended on slavery to grow cotton and tobacco.

permanent settlements and a greater diversification of labor because different types of workers, such as farmers, craftspeople, and traders, were all necessary to the economy.

The Agricultural Revolution

The **Agricultural Revolution** continued some of the social and economic changes that began with horticultural societies. Better farming and ranching techniques allowed larger groups to thrive and remain in one location for longer periods of time. The Agricultural Revolution lasted for many centuries, but in the eighteenth century food production was greatly increased by new innovations in farming and animal husbandry: the invention of new types of plows and mechanized seed spreaders and new techniques of crop rotation, irrigation, and selective breeding.

The agricultural economy that flourished in the early United States encouraged a stratified labor force. For large plantation owners to accumulate wealth from cotton or sugar-cane crops, they depended on cheap, plentiful labor. The division of labor fell largely along race, gender, and class lines (Amott and Matthaei 1996). In the pre–Civil War era, many of the plantations of the South that were owned by whites were farmed by black slaves brought from Africa (A. Davis 2001). Poorer white people sometimes owned small farms or worked as tenant farmers or sharecroppers. White men were usually owners of land and small businesses, while white women were usually household managers.

Agricultural Revolution the social and economic changes, including population increases, that followed from the domestication of plants and animals and the gradually increasing efficiency of food production

The Industrial Revolution

The **Industrial Revolution** was a time of rapid technological, social, and economic change that almost completely transformed life in modern times—a radical break from the past disrupting social patterns that had been relatively stable for centuries. When we discuss the Industrial Revolution in this section, we will look at the technological innovations of the era and how they changed American society and culture, the economy, and the lives of workers.

The Industrial Revolution began in England with the invention of the steam engine in 1769, which was first used to power machinery, starting with the manufacture of textiles. By the end of the eighteenth century, Britain's steam-powered factories had spread to the United States and other nations (Hughes and Cain 1994). With more mechanized machinery such as the cotton gin, the American economy moved from manual labor to machine manufacturing. Even farming would change with the introduction of mechanical reapers and plows. The nineteenth century brought steam-powered ships and railways, the internal combustion engine, electrical power generation, and new tools and appliances. By the end of the 1800s, the modern corporation had emerged—a business that could manage a range of activities across geographic regions. A successful corporation not only manufactured products but also managed all aspects of marketing and distribution.

With the shift to a manufacturing economy, vast numbers of people migrated into cities from rural areas in search of work. There was a great influx of immigrants, primarily from Europe, who provided a steady source of cheap, easily exploitable labor. By 1910, more than 13 million people living in the United States were foreign born (Gibson and Lennon 2001). Densely populated neighborhoods sprang up to accommodate the masses, housing was often substandard, and many families lived in poverty. Employment in manufacturing meant that people no longer worked in or around their homes as artisans or craftsmen, as many had in the past, but that they went off into the industrial districts of large cities to work in factories. Wage labor replaced the household subsistence model of the agricultural society.

The industrial economy increased stratification of the workforce along class, race, and gender lines (Amott and Matthaei 1996). Wealthy white families owned the means of production, such as factories, energy sources, or land, and the financial institutions that supported the accumulation of wealth; the men were in the workplace while the women ran the household. A middle class of educated, skilled workers emerged, often in managerial professions. Working-class white men now earned a "family wage" at the factory, while women worked in the household. But for families that needed more than one income, women and even children joined the workforce. Poor women, immigrant women, and women of color increasingly performed domestic labor in white women's households (Amott and Matthaei 1996). But they also worked at factory jobs that were reserved for women, such as millwork and sewing in textile factories, for meager wages and under dangerous conditions.

Industrial Revolution the rapid transformation of social life resulting from the technological and economic developments that began with the assembly line, steam power, and urbanization

The industrial economy revolved around the mass production of goods, aided by use of the assembly line in the manufacturing process, in which parts were added to a product in sequential order. The moving assembly line is attributed to Henry Ford, who in 1913 used it to manufacture automobiles in Detroit, Michigan. With assembly line production, the process of manufacturing became not only more mechanized but also more routine driven. In contrast to the artisan mode, in which one worker or a team of workers would produce an item in its entirety from start to finish, on an assembly line each worker would do one or two specific tasks over and over again. Many workers disliked the assembly line because they never had the satisfaction of seeing the finished product, and they were also frustrated with the unsafe, exhausting working conditions.

The Industrial Revolution changed not only working conditions but also the lives of workers. The United States and most other industrializing nations experienced great population booms not only because of immigration but also because of discoveries in science and medicine that led to increased life expectancy and decreased infant mortality. Also, many more people had access to dependable food and water sources and some form of health care. Laws giving



Women Working in a Shoe Factory Many factory jobs that were reserved for women paid meager wages and required working under dangerous conditions.

some protections to workers, such as child labor reforms, also emerged as an important aspect of the overall health of working populations. Although many factory workers were unskilled, the American workforce of the early twentieth century was becoming better trained and more educated than that of any other previous generation.

The growing population of the United States became a market for the mass-produced goods it was manufacturing. Because industrial workers no longer worked on farms and in the home producing their own food and clothes, they had to purchase those items with the wages they earned for their labor. They also had to buy services, such as health care and child care, from other providers. Other changes in everyday life were also part of the Industrial Revolution: Americans were introduced to new forms of communication with the Morse telegraph in 1837 and the invention of the telephone in 1876, and they traveled more easily across the country with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869.

The Information Revolution

The **Information Revolution** is the most recent of the historical and technological changes that have led to new economic and working conditions in the United States and around the world. Also referred to as the Digital Revolution, Digital Age, or Postindustrial Age, it is expected to bring about as dramatic a transformation of society as the revolutions that preceded it (Castells 2000). We may not recognize how truly radical this change is, partly because we are at the edge of a revolution that will continue to evolve over our lifetimes.

The Information Revolution began in the 1970s with the development of the microchip or microprocessor used in computers and other electronic devices. The performance capacity of microprocessors has continued to increase according to Moore's Law (doubling about every 18 months). When computers were coupled with the introduction of the internet in the early 1990s and became more affordable, they were soon widely used. Other technologies associated with the Information Revolution include computer networking and all types of digital media, satellite and cable broadcasting, and telecommunications. The Information Revolution had become a ubiquitous part of everyday life in the twenty-first century.

The Information Revolution brought a profound shift from an economy based on the production of goods to one based on the production of knowledge and services (Castells 2000). Of course, the United States is still involved in agriculture and manufacturing, but these are shrinking parts of our economy. As American companies compete on the global market, they may find it more profitable to move production overseas to exploit cheaper materials and labor in developing countries. According to the Department of Labor, the U.S. economy currently consists of some 12 "supersectors," or areas in which people work. Fully two-thirds of these are in the knowledge or service sectors.

12 Supersectors of the United States Economy

Construction

Education and Health Services

Financial Activities

Government

Information

Leisure and Hospitality

Manufacturing

Natural Resources and Mining

Other Services

Professional and Business Services

Transportation and Utilities

Wholesale and Retail Trade

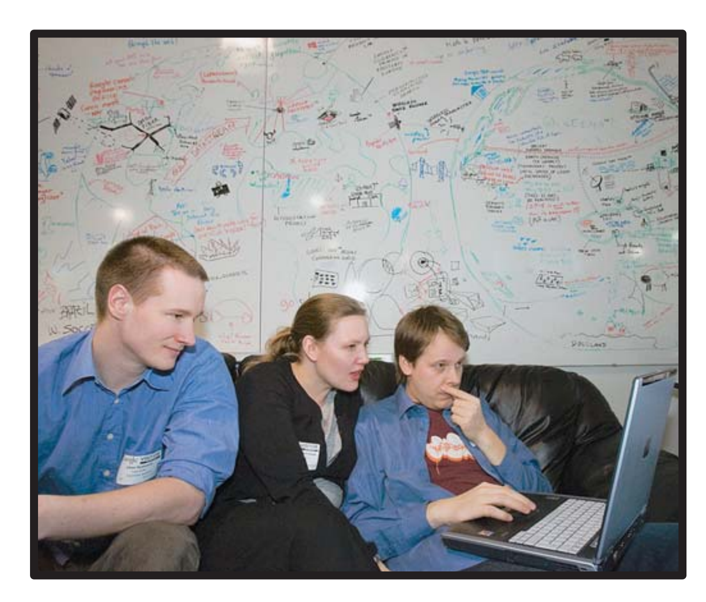
A **knowledge worker** is anyone who works primarily with information or who develops and uses knowledge in the workplace (Drucker 1959, 2003). For these workers, information and knowledge are both the raw material and the product of their labor. Knowledge workers produce with their heads rather than with their hands. They create value in the economy through their ideas, judgments, analyses, designs, and innovations. Some examples of knowledge work include advertising, engineering, marketing, product development, research, science, urban planning, and web design. Microsoft, a major software development company, further broadens this category to include anyone who works with the flow of information within businesses.

The service sector, or service industry, has also experienced tremendous growth in the postindustrial economy and employs an ever greater number of American workers. **Service workers** provide a service to businesses or individual

Information Revolution the recent social revolution made possible by the development of the microchip in the 1970s, which brought about vast improvements in the ability to manage information

knowledge workers those who work primarily with information and who create value in the economy through ideas, judgments, analyses, designs, or innovations

service workers those whose work involves providing a service to businesses or individual clients, customers, or consumers rather than manufacturing goods



Knowledge Workers The Information Revolution has shifted the economy away from manufacturing toward jobs that produce knowledge and provide services. Knowledge workers, like these employees at Google, create value through their ideas, judgments, and analyses.

clients. Services may entail the distribution or sale of goods from producer to consumer (wholesaling and retailing) or transformation in the process of delivering goods (the restaurant business) or no goods at all (massage therapy). All service work has a focus on serving and interacting with people. Service work can be found in such industries as banking, consulting, education, entertainment, health care, insurance, investment, legal services, leisure, news media, restaurants, retailing, tourism, and transportation.

Some service work pays well, particularly at the management and executive levels, and in certain fields such as banking, entertainment, and law; but much service sector employment is unstable, part-time or temporary, low paying, and often without benefits such as health care or retirement. Women, persons of color, and the poor are likely to be found in the service sector, thus perpetuating a lower-class status among those holding such positions (Amott and Matthaei 1996). Finally, unemployment rates for service sector workers are substantially higher than for knowledge workers (U.S. Census Bureau 2002b).

The postindustrial economy presents a very different social reality from the economy in other periods in history. The Information Revolution has changed almost every aspect of our lives and has become a part of many of our social institutions, including the economy and work. In the next sections we look at current world economic systems and the features of work in industrial and postindustrial settings. But first, let's see what kinds of jobs the characters on prime time television hold by doing the content analysis assigned in this Data Workshop.



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

The Work World of Prime Time Television

CIA double agent, salesperson, newscaster, presidential press secretary, fire fighter, private investigator, district attorney, forensics expert, massage therapist, plastic surgeon, talk show host, police officer, soap opera star, interior designer, school principal, porn magnate, military officer . . .

These are just some of the jobs of characters in different prime time network television shows. How do these jobs compare with those of your family, friends, or acquaintances? What kinds of work-related issues do characters on television experience compared to those of real people in those same job titles or industries?

Sociologists who are interested in the media often ask such questions when comparing media content to the real world. This Data Workshop asks you to look at how prime time television shows represent jobs and the realities of working life. Your instructor might want you to do all the exercises, or she may ask you to choose just one or two.

Exercise One: What Are the Jobs in Prime Time?
Do a simple count of the jobs in prime time television. Look at the lineup of current shows between 8:00 and 11:00 P.M. (depending on your time zone) on the major networks (CBS, NBC, ABC, FOX, and CW) and choose at least two shows each night for a total of 14 or more to analyze. Review the key characters and see if you can determine what kinds of jobs they have. While some shows are based almost entirely in the workplace, others may rarely refer to work. There may be some characters whose job status is unclear or absent. Once you have compiled a list of jobs and the number of characters working in each job category, compare these to workers in the real world. What is the actual percentage of people who hold these types of positions? (Sources for this information include the U.S. Census Bureau [www.census.gov] and Bureau of Labor Statistics [www.bls.gov] among other websites.) See if you can find out whether certain jobs are under- or overrepresented on television or whether there are other kinds of disparities between the statistics of the TV world and the real world. If you present your findings in essay form, use charts or graphs where necessary.



Working in Prime Time How do television shows like *Ugly Betty* (left) and *Grey's Anatomy* (right) represent working life?

Exercise Two: Working Conditions and TV Jobs
Examine the workplace as depicted on prime time television. You may choose one or more programs (depending on the context) to gather enough data to do a content analysis. Look at the way characters perform their jobs in television shows. Often workers are shown socializing or engaging in other kinds of personal activities while on the job. How much real work gets done? And when characters are actually working, what aspects of that work are featured during the program? Often we see only the most unusual or glamorous aspects of work while the day-to-day routine or behind-the-scenes aspects rarely appear. Another dimension is how characters relate to their jobs and to their coworkers. Are they happy and fulfilled by the work they do? Do they complain about work or experience other kinds of troubles with their jobs? How are power and resistance exercised in the workplace? Discuss your findings and assess the extent to which you believe the programs accurately reflect these professions in real life.

Exercise Three: Real Working Professionals and Representations on TV
For this exercise you will need to identify a particular job or profession portrayed on a prime time television program and find someone you know who works in that job or profession to interview. Watch the television show with this person (you might consider taping episodes in advance to prescreen for relevance). After you have viewed the program, discuss with the interviewee the similarities and differences between real work and the same work done by the characters on television. How closely does the show reflect the actual job or profession? In what ways does TV distort or otherwise misrepresent the job or profession? If your analysis of the interview is in essay form, include a transcript of your questions and answers.

Exercise Four: Making a Living on TV
As one of the most powerful sources of socialization in the lives of young people, television may contribute to our attitudes and ideas about the working world. What kinds of lessons do we learn about work and money from what we see on TV? How do television characters influence our career goals and aspirations? Some jobs are totally absent, some are shown as merely the butt of jokes, while others are made to seem hip, glamorous, or exciting. We rarely get much information about how characters have gotten their jobs or what kind of training or experience got them to their positions. We also know very little about how hard they work or what they get paid. TV characters often seem to live extravagant lifestyles with little relationship between actual salaries and what they can afford to buy. Take examples from one or more television shows and discuss the characters' standard of living. Could real people working comparable jobs afford the same lifestyle that the television characters seem to enjoy? Do a content analysis, recording at least one episode of a chosen program and describing as many of the details of work and lifestyle of the characters as possible to answer these questions.

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Choose one of the exercises above and follow the instructions as outlined. Bring notes to class to discuss with others in small groups. Your instructor may organize groups so that all members have done the same exercise or all members have done a different exercise. In either case, compare your findings with those of other members of the group.

- *Option 2 (formal)*: Choose one of the exercises above (or your instructor may assign a specific exercise) and follow the instructions as outlined. Write a three- to four-page essay analyzing your findings.

Economic Systems: Comparing Capitalism and Socialism

Capitalism and socialism are political-economic systems found around the world, often in overlapping forms. Capitalism and socialism are ideal types, but most nations have a mix of both. For example, the United States, a capitalist nation, has some degree of socialism in government subsidies to businesses, regulation of markets, and support for public education and social welfare.

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system based on the laws of free market competition, privatization of the means of production, and production for profit. In its purest form, values for goods and services are derived solely by the market relationship between supply and demand. The resources necessary for production of goods and services are all privately owned. Owners, or capitalists, must employ workers to make products and perform services to generate a profit. Workers sell their labor to capitalists for a wage. The difference between the cost of production of a product or service and its price is profit to which the capitalist is entitled.

Capitalism tends to encourage class stratification. Because owners, or capitalists, make profits, they can accumulate wealth. Workers are not in a structural position to get ahead financially. The ideologies of the free market, private property, and profit-seeking motives that define capitalism also shape institutions other than the economy. In capitalist nations, we see increasing privatization of basic human services such as health care, housing, and education. Thus, hospitals, public school systems, and even welfare agencies are increasingly taken over by private for-profit firms.

Under capitalism, workers must sell their labor to capitalists for a wage. They are encouraged to be productive and efficient or they will suffer reduced wages, decreased social welfare services such as health insurance and retirement, downsizing, and layoffs. Until recently, under the capitalist system in the United States, disgruntled workers could withhold their labor by striking. Now, under a transnational capitalist system, firms experiencing strikes may decide to move their operations overseas to countries where few workers have the right to strike.

A capitalist economy encourages efficiency through technological innovation, expansion of markets, and reduction of production costs. Thus, owners or capitalists, in their efforts to seek efficiency, often replace workers with new technologies, reduce social welfare spending, and cut labor costs. Therefore, workers are responsible for maintaining their own competitiveness. They must seek an education and/or skills to compete for jobs and maintain their competency over their working lifetimes. However, firms must also increase their competitiveness. They may move production operations to overseas sites where they can take advantage of deregulated environments and cheap labor costs.

capitalism an economic system based on the laws of free market competition, privatization of the means of production, and production for profit, with an emphasis on supply and demand as a means to set prices

socialism an economic system based on the collective ownership of the means of production, collective distribution of goods and services, and government regulation of the economy

communism a system of government that eliminates private property; the most extreme form of socialism, because all citizens work for the government and there are no class distinctions

Socialism

Socialism is an economic system based on collective ownership of the means of production, collective distribution of goods and services, and government regulation of the economy. Under socialism, there are no private for-profit transactions. In its purest form, socialism seeks to meet the basic needs of all citizens rather than encouraging profits for some individuals over others.

In a socialist system the government rather than individuals owns or at least regulates the ownership of all businesses, farms, and factories, and profits are redistributed to the collective citizenry. This encourages a collectivist work ethic with workers theoretically working for the common good of all citizens. Citizens have access to resources such as health care, food, housing, and other social services to meet their basic needs. This is different from capitalism, as these services are an entitlement of all people, not just those who can afford them.

In socialism, a central and usually highly bureaucratic government regulates all aspects of the economy—ownership of resources and means of production, regulation of lending policies, interest rates, and currency values—as well as setting labor policies regarding such issues as maternity/paternity leave, retirement, and the right to strike. Such intense regulation of the economy should effectively reduce class inequalities and extreme poverty. In **communism**, the most extreme

form of socialism, the government owns everything and all citizens work for the government and are considered equal, with no class distinctions. Socialism and communism, like capitalism, are theoretical or ideal types. Thus, no nations are purely socialist or communist. Even communist countries like Cuba or the People's Republic of China are increasingly incorporating capitalist ideologies into their regimes.

Under socialism, workers are not at risk of extreme poverty and class division as some might be within a capitalist society. They are not as vulnerable as capitalist workers to new technological innovations or the movement of transnational capital. However, they also do not enjoy the same consumption patterns that capitalist economies encourage. Socialism cannot provide capitalism's middle-class luxuries. Though class division is reduced, it is still present. Many socialist nations have political elites who enjoy a higher class of living than workers, and urban workers often benefit from having closer access to resources than rural workers. Further, reduction of class inequalities cannot guarantee a reduction in other types of inequalities such as racism, sexism, and ageism.

The United States: A Capitalist System with Some Socialist Attributes

To understand the political economy of various nations, think of capitalism and socialism as opposite sides of a continuum and nations placed along its span as being more capitalist or more socialist. The United States would undoubtedly lie closer to the capitalist side than would Sweden, but even U.S. capitalism is not a pure form.

While the United States is a capitalist nation, it also has socialist elements. Although capitalist businesses are privately owned, many benefit from government subsidies—grants, tax incentives, and special contracts. This is often referred to as "corporate welfare." In pure capitalism, such support would not exist. Government intervenes in the economy in other ways as well. Agencies such as the Federal Reserve Board often manipulate interest rates to stimulate the economy and control inflation. The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (also referred to as "the Bailout Bill") funneled over $700 billion in government funds into banks, insurance companies, and other struggling private corporations in order to prop up the U.S. economy. Such government interventions constitute forms of socialism.

If the United States were purely capitalist, institutions such as education and health care would all be privately owned. However, most schools and universities are publicly owned and operated. Even private universities usually get government subsidies. Health care is a trickier example. Many individuals and their employers buy health insurance from for-profit insurers, and hospitals are often run for profit. But federal programs such as Medicare and Medicaid provide subsidized health care for the elderly and the poor.

The government also spends millions of dollars annually for other general assistance or public aid programs for low-income families, including Food Stamps and Temporary



Social Support in the United States Displaced by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, these Americans wait for food stamps at Camp Edwards in Bourne, Massachusetts. A disaster like Hurricane Katrina provides an extreme example of Americans' dependence on social support from the government. Americans along the Gulf Coast turned to the government for help after the storm, but federal, state, and local agencies were slow to respond. Ultimately, Hurricane Katrina displaced over 1 million people and left more than 1,600 dead.

Assistance to Needy Families, often referred to as "entitlements." Thus, the poor, the elderly, current and former armed forces personnel, and expectant mothers, infants, and children have some public services to meet their health care needs. Even our Social Security system, though partially funded through payroll taxes, is a public system providing retirement, survivorship, and disability benefits to eligible Americans. Debates continue about whether these populations' needs are satisfactorily met and whether it's the government's responsibility to provide these services.

In their purest forms, capitalism and socialism are opposites. In reality, capitalism and socialism can be characterized as lying along a continuum, with nations having some features of both economic systems. Each system represents a different political ideology and economic reality for the people and workers in its economy. Economic systems evolve and change over time, and with them, the institution of work.



Twenty-First-Century Industrial Work Many workers still toil in the conditions that Marx criticized in the nineteenth century. For example, compare this photo of workers at Emyco Shoe Factory in Guanajuato, Mexico, to the workers in the shoe factory in 1910 on page 344.

The Nature of Industrial and Postindustrial Work

Historical and technological changes leading to the Agricultural, Industrial, and Information Revolutions fundamentally changed societies across several centuries. Societies have also adopted economic systems—capitalist or socialist, or a combination of both—and these economic systems influence the types of work that are available as well as our patterns of working.

Industrial Work

The spread of industrialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created "work" in the modern sense. Before the Industrial Revolution most of the population engaged in agriculture, and the production of goods was organized around the household or small craft shops. In the industrial world, progress meant making machines produce more goods, more efficiently.

According to Karl Marx, the powerful have always exploited workers. As he said in the *Communist Manifesto*, "oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another" in a perpetual struggle for economic resources, as all history "is the history of class struggles" (Marx 2001, p. 245). Though Marx studied ancient Rome and medieval Europe to help form his theories, they are most often associated with the Industrial Revolution, the capitalist economies that it produced, and the workers who toiled in its factories. However, much of what Marx asserted about class conflict and the circumstances of his time can apply with slight modification to capitalists and workers in the current industrial workplace.

Economic exploitation is still present in a modern industrial economy, which allows for the accumulation of what Marx called "surplus value." The proletariat or workers in an industrial economy possess only one thing of economic value, and that is their time, which they sell to capitalists who own the means of production. Workers are paid for their time and labor, but their wages do not represent the full profit from the sale of the goods they produce. The sale of the goods not only covers the workers' wages and the expenses of running the factory but also generates additional revenue or surplus value, which then belongs to the owner.

Marx believed that workers in capitalist societies experienced alienation as a result of this system of production, because they are paid for their labor but do not own the things they produce. He believed workers were alienated in four ways: from the product of their labor, from their own productive activity, from their fellow workers, and finally from human nature. First, the products of the worker's labor are the property of the capitalists to do with as they see fit. Unlike the farmers and craft workers of prior eras, the industrial worker is "robbed of . . . the objects of his work" and "the worker relates to the product of his labor as an alien object" (Marx 2001, p. 87). Workers feel no sense of personal satisfaction in producing goods that are owned and controlled by someone else.

Second, workers in a capitalist society are alienated from the process of work, their own productive activity. Marx argues that labor is "not the satisfaction of a need but only the means to satisfy needs" outside work (Marx 2001, p. 88),

such as earning enough money to live on. In precapitalist societies, many found joy and fulfillment in the process of production. But the worker under capitalism cannot feel that kind of satisfaction.

Third, the worker is alienated from other people, "the alienation of man from man," as Marx calls it. Capitalism forces individuals into competition with each other, as "each man measures his relationship to other men by the relationship in which he finds himself placed as a worker" (Marx 2001, p. 91). Instead of cooperating, workers are forced to compete for scarce jobs and resources, making other workers an alien and hostile presence. Workers are also alienated from the owners, as they recognize work as "an activity that is under the domination, oppression, and yoke of another man" (Marx 2001, p. 92).

Fourth, workers are alienated from human nature, what Marx tends to refer to as "human essence." He believes that work should not be an unhappy burden taken up only out of the need to preserve physical existence. Instead, he assumes that it is in our nature to seek out "work, vital activity, and productive life" (Marx 2001, p. 90). The essence of what it means to be human is to engage in free conscious activity, but capitalism degrades human labor to a mere means of survival. Marx acknowledges that all species must work to satisfy immediate physical needs, but only human beings "fashion things according to the laws of beauty" and find satisfaction in their work (Marx 2001, p. 90). However, in a capitalist economy this capacity is largely lost, as workers are alienated from their own human qualities.

Marx was describing work in the industrial era of the nineteenth century, but his analyses can apply to today's workers as well. Many workers are still toiling in the same conditions of exploitation, alienation, and class struggle that Marx thought needed to change.

Postindustrial Service Work

Social theorists of the Industrial Age, like Karl Marx and his contemporaries, were unable to predict how technological innovation would transform work and the economy in the twentieth century and beyond. They could not foresee the transition to a postindustrial, service-oriented economy. Nor could they foresee the advent of easily available consumer credit, which has meant that workers can now buy things they can't currently afford, materially improving their everyday lives without the hassle of starting a class revolution (even if it means they may never pay off their debts).

So, are service workers exploited? Alienated? Ready to revolt? A look at the nature of service work in the Postindustrial Age and a case study seem to suggest that these old problems have taken on new forms in our current times.

Service work, as the dominant form of employment in the postindustrial economy, often involves direct contact with clients, customers, patients, or students by those rendering the service, whether they are waiters, cashiers, nurses, doctors, teachers, or receptionists. In service work, situations arise when the worker's concerns, standards, and expectations conflict with those of clients. For example, an emergency for a client may be routine for a worker, as when your TV cable service goes out during the Packers' game and the customer service representative just keeps telling you they're working on it! As another example, you have a toothache, but the dentist doesn't have an open appointment until tomorrow. It's not the dentist who has to give you the bad news but the receptionist who must try to convince you to wait until then.

At the same time, service workers are also subject to the scrutiny and critique of a manager or supervisor—so in addition to the potential clash between workers and clients, there are also issues of autonomy and control over their work. This can create distinctive tensions in service work interactions, and power relationships both subtle and more obvious are clearly present in this type of work.

Barbara Ehrenreich explored some of these power issues in her book *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (2001). As research for the book, Ehrenreich took minimum-wage service jobs in three different cities—as a waitress in Florida, a hotel maid in Maine, and a Wal-Mart employee in Minnesota—and experienced the difficulties of trying to make ends meet and maintain her self-respect in low-wage service positions.

Ehrenreich found that service workers in these types of jobs are likely to be exploited in a number of ways. First, the



Nickel and Dimed Barbara Ehrenreich found that many service workers barely scrape by working long hours for minimum wage and no benefits. Because many service workers live paycheck to paycheck, they may have trouble asserting their rights or taking time off for illnesses for fear of losing their jobs.

telecommuting working from home while staying connected to the office through communications technology

low wages, lack of benefits, and grueling hours make it difficult to pay even the most basic bills. She discovered this herself when she couldn't scrape up enough money for a deposit on an apartment and ended up living in a sleazy hotel and getting her dinner from the local charity's food pantry. Her coworkers lived in flophouses, their cars, or small apartments crowded with family, friends, and strangers, and one ate nothing but a small bag of Doritos every day for lunch. They got fired for asserting their rights or for getting ill or injured, and they developed chronic health problems because of the stress and poor conditions under which they labored. And yet, they couldn't stop—they were all reliant on the next paycheck to get by (or not get by, as Ehrenreich argues), and so they had to endure abuse, exploitation, and all sorts of risks for the tenuous security of serving, scrubbing, and selling.

You encounter these people every day—when you eat at a restaurant, shop at a "big box" retailer, or stay at a hotel—and you may even be one yourself. Ehrenreich argues that there's no way to "make it" under these circumstances, and her experiences illustrate this argument with chilling clarity.

Inequalities of power in service work have many sources—gender, race, age, and immigration status—and those with greater power (clients, managers) may take advantage without even realizing it. Ehrenreich reminds us that even in "respectable" forms of service work, exploitation is common. What about jobs that are illegal—such as prostitution or the work of undocumented farm laborers? These workers lack the legal protections that Wal-Mart workers or chain restaurant waitstaff have access to, and they may be subject to prosecution and punishment merely for doing their jobs.

Postindustrial Knowledge Work

In the new millennium, intellectual or information work is increasingly common while manual labor is increasingly rare (Tapscott 1997). The massive changes wrought by information technologies—often referred to as the "new economy"—have again transformed the nature of work in ways that are not yet fully understood (Kellner 2001).

The majority of the workforce in the United States now hold jobs that involve working with information, and most new jobs created are primarily within this sector. While many of these technologies purport to increase productivity and save time, the average worker is also working more hours in a week than her predecessor in the pre–Information Age workplace.

Another important feature of the Information Age workplace is greatly diminished importance of place. This phenomenon has been called the "death of distance" (Caincross 1995). Work that can be done on a computer can be done from any location, as networking through computers, satellite, cell phones, and other technologies makes workers' location almost irrelevant to their ability to get the work done and to work with others (Poster 2002).

More and more workers are **telecommuting**. They stay at home rather than commute to the office, and they are connected to their workplace through communications technology. According to a 2006 survey, over 26 million Americans telecommute at least part-time, and this number is projected to increase significantly in the coming years (American Interactive Consumer Survey 2006).

Supporters claim that telecommuting has many benefits for the worker, the business, and society at large. Employees get flexible work schedules. Traffic delays, parking problems, and time wasted commuting don't exist for the telecommuter.



The Postindustrial Office? To attract the best knowledge workers and to motivate them to work long hours, information and technology companies like Google and Microsoft go to great lengths to make the workplace appealing.



Disembodied Colleagues

Ironically, all the communication technologies that increase connections between people may ultimately make them feel more alienated from other human beings. This is a common complaint of workers in the software industry. In the novel *Microserfs* by Douglas Coupland, a neurotic Microsoft employee describes the joys of e-mail:

> I'm an e-mail addict. Everybody at Microsoft is an addict. The future of e-mail usage is being pioneered right here. The cool thing with e-mail is that when you send it, there's no possibility of connecting with the person on the other end. It's better than phone answering machines, because with them, the person on the other line might actually pick up the phone and you might have to talk. (Coupland 1995)

Coupland was probably exaggerating somewhat, but there is no doubt that the business practices first adopted by cutting-edge technology companies have influenced almost every part of the economy.

Even a seemingly minor change, like the adoption of e-mail, can profoundly affect the way people experience their workplace. In his article "Workers as Cyborgs: Labor and Networked Computers," Mark Poster details the increase in alienation that can come when a workplace switches to electronic communications. For instance, "a hospital in the Midwest that introduced a software program for ordering supplies from the Internet" saw increases in efficiency but also found that the technology "furthers the alienation of the worker" (Poster 2002). Using the new software may have gotten supplies ordered more quickly and with fewer errors, but "electronic communications are void of personal nuances characteristic of face-to-face communications" (Poster 2002). In short, it gets lonely when the only person you talk to is your computer.

Telecommuters who live alone may experience alienation and loneliness because the traditional workplace is often a major source of shared experience. Even worse, many of those who had hoped telecommuting would give them more quality time with their families are finding that working from home can actually intensify the conflict between work and family. As one study of telecommuters explains, "work can take over our personal lives. . . . If you're working from the family computer in the middle of the family room, your kids see you at work and don't understand why you're physically there, but mentally you're someplace else" (AHENS 2003).

All these situations stress increased alienation as the result of the Information Age. Will your work involve you with others in face-to-face interaction, or will you "know" your coworkers, colleagues, customers, and clients only through disembodied relationships?

Businesses get increased productivity and fewer sick days when they allow employees to telecommute. Although many employers worry that allowing employees to work from home would reduce accountability, some believe that the opposite is true. In traditional office environments the only measure of employee value is the number of hours present in the office, regardless of what gets done, whereas telecommuters must demonstrate their accomplishments more concretely. Telecommuting and similar uses of information technology have also made it easier for single parents or workers with disabilities to stay employed full-time.

There is much debate around the positive and negative aspects of telecommuting and other technologies that physically and geographically separate workers. Some suggest that new information technologies will actually increase the need for face-to-face contact and tightly knit workplaces. For example, workers who write codes for computer software can do it anywhere they have a computer and instantly send the results to those who will package and market the software, but software companies are still the most geographically concentrated of any industry. Microsoft, the world's largest software company, refers to its home office as "the campus" and has gone to great lengths to make it an appealing place for employees precisely because the company still needs them at the same location in order to work. In the Information Age, more and more work requires the creative manipulation of knowledge, and for this workers need to brainstorm

and share ideas in more interactive ways than the technology allows even now. The computer industry suggests that even when work can be done anywhere there will still be a real need to bring people together, at least some of the time.

The rise of new technologies may roll back many of the original effects of the Industrial Revolution. Manufacturing made it necessary for many people to work at the same location, causing the growth of cities and the decline of rural and small-town populations. However, with new technologies that let people work from anywhere, perhaps telecommuting will cause cities to shrink again as more people will be able to live without reference to the company that employs them. Small towns are now offering an attractive alternative to outsourcing. High-tech jobs are beginning to relocate to rural areas, where companies are finding it cheaper to do business and more attractive for their employees (Pinto 2005). It's possible that information technology may one day reunite the worlds of work and home that the Industrial Revolution tore asunder.

Last, it's not just knowledge workers who rely on this new information technology. The Digital Age has also changed the way industrial and service work is conducted. Even jobs traditionally considered to be in manufacturing now have a knowledge component. For example, the big three automakers in the United States have in the past hired college graduates for the assembly line because they needed employees able to identify and suggest quality improvements (Brandon 1996). In the service sector, retail outlets and grocery stores use computer databases to predict exactly how much of a product they need to keep on hand and to order new merchandise in a timely fashion, a system called "just in time inventory," drastically reducing overhead and waste. Insurance companies use instant messaging (IM) technology to connect workers in different offices or in the field, "finding IM not only improves accuracy and provides timely customer response but adds dollars to their bottom line" (Chordas 2003).

Individual and Collective Resistance Strategies: How Workers Cope

Individuals and groups cope with their working conditions in a variety of ways called **resistance strategies**. These are tactics that let workers take back a degree of control over the conditions of their labor and feel that they have some sense of autonomy even in the face of dehumanizing, alienating constraints imposed by the terms and demands of their employment.

resistance strategies ways that workers express discontent with their working conditions and try to reclaim control of the conditions of their labor

Individual resistance can range from the fairly benign, like using work time to surf the web, to the truly dangerous, like sabotaging the assembly line. More often, individual resistance may be simply personalizing the workspace with photos or daydreaming on the job as a type of escape (Roy 1960). Collective forms of resistance that seek solutions to shared workplace problems include union organizing and membership, strikes, walk-outs, and work stoppages.

This discussion begins with an examination of individual resistance strategies within service work. We bring Weber's theory on bureaucracy into the present to see how workers today are coping with the constraints of those organizations. Last we look at collective resistance strategies—union organization both past and present.

Individual Resistance Strategies: Handling Bureaucratic Constraints

Bureaucratic organizations are found in almost every sector of the economy. In Max Weber's theory of bureaucracies, he highlighted the rational, impersonal, and coldly efficient nature of this form of social organization (refer to Chapter 6 for a review). Workers in highly bureaucratic organizations often feel the lack of autonomy in their everyday work lives. Autonomy is the ability to direct one's individual destiny—to have the power to control the conditions of one's labor—and this is generally lacking for people who work in highly structured, rule-bound, and depersonalized environments. Their daily tasks are structured by external forces: for example, the pace of the assembly line is decided for them and they cannot slow it down or speed it up if they need to take a break or want to finish work early.

In many corporate settings, employees at all levels are under various types of surveillance: electronic key cards monitor their comings and goings, cameras record their activities, computer transactions are screened, and phone calls are recorded. In retail sales, workers' interactions with customers are often scripted, so that even what they say to others is outside their control. Not only is there a lack of autonomy, but there is also a lack of individuality in the workplace. Workers are treated more like robots than people. Unlike a robot, however, human workers can resist and undermine the bureaucratic constraints that limit their autonomy in the workplace—and they do so in a wide variety of ways.

Robin Leidner's study *Fast Food, Fast Talk* provides an in-depth look at individual resistance strategies in the workplace (Leidner 1993). The study focuses on McDonald's employees and the routinized nature of their interactions



Fast Food, Fast Talk In her study of restaurant employees, Robin Leidner looks at the ways that workers subvert the scripts that McDonald's requires them to follow when interacting with customers.

with customers. Under the golden arches, every contact between the counter staff and the hungry consumer is strictly scripted, seemingly with no room for improvisation or creativity. Or is there?

McDonald's workers are trained to interact with customers using "The Six Steps": greeting, taking orders, assembling food, presenting it, receiving payment, and thanking them for their business. As monotonous as these steps are, workers don't necessarily resent routinization—it helps them do their jobs effectively. And some workers, like this woman, improvise on the steps, personalizing them in tiny but still noticeable ways:

> Just do the Six Steps, but do it in your own way. It's not like you have to say "Hi, welcome to McDonald's." You can say, "Hi, how are you doing?" or "Good morning," "Good afternoon," "Good evening," things like that. (Leidner 1993, p. 138)

Leidner observed that there were limits within which workers could

> use the script as a starting point and inject [their] own personality into the interactions. Thus, some window workers joked or chatted with customers and tried to make the exchanges enjoyable for both parties. This stance implied an assertion of equality with customers and a refusal to suppress the self completely. (Leidner 1993, p. 190)

Leidner proposes that submitting to scripted interactions all day long suppresses the real self and that this sort of tightly controlled work environment can actually be damaging to the individual.

One of the functions of McDonald's service script is to regulate the power relationship between customer and worker: customers' demands can be delivered with all types of attitude, but workers must always serve customers with a smile. The script constrains workers' response—if they have a rude or even abusive customer, they must still stick to the script:

> You have to take their crap. [Laughs.] I'm not the type of person to say, "OK, have it your way." I mean, I have to admit, I'm tempted to backtalk a lot. That gets me in a lot of trouble. So I mean, when a customer's rude to me I just have to walk away and say, "Could you take this order please, before I say something I'm not supposed to say?" (Leidner 1993, p. 133)

If they do pervert the script or talk back to a rude customer, workers may be inviting a reprimand from their supervisor. But they are also engaging in resistance, asserting their own identities in the face of the depersonalizing routine. They are being active rather than passive, controlling the interaction rather than being controlled by it. They are asserting their own autonomy on the job, and it is apparently worth the risk.

It is difficult to think of a form of employment that would allow us to avoid these bureaucratic constraints altogether. What types of resistance strategies have you used to regain a bit of independence and power in the workplace?

Collective Resistance Strategies: Unions in the Past and Present

Although individual resistance strategies may provide a small measure of autonomy for some workers, they don't fundamentally change the working conditions or make permanent improvements to the terms of employment for all workers. That is why workers sometimes seek more lasting solutions to their problems by organizing to instigate collective resistance strategies—by forming unions.

A **union** benefits workers in various ways and serves to counterbalance the power of employers. A labor union is an association of workers who come together to improve their economic status and working conditions. The two main types of unions are craft unions, in which all the members are skilled in a certain craft (e.g., the International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners), and industrial unions, in which all the members work in the same industry regardless of their particular skill (e.g., the Service Employees International Union). Some unions are local with small memberships; others are large, national organizations representing millions of workers. Unions have legal status to represent workers in contract negotiations with employers.

union an association of workers who bargain collectively for increased wages and benefits and better working conditions



Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1912 During the 1912 textile mill strike, workers demanded "bread and roses," eloquently capturing their desire for something more than the wages needed to survive.

When disagreements arise between management and employees, unionized workers may threaten to or actually stage a temporary "walkout," "work stoppage," or "strike" to express their grievance and force corporate managers and owners to negotiate. Often the striking workers will try to discourage the public from patronizing the businesses implicated in the labor dispute and try to prevent other, outside replacement workers (sometimes called "scab labor") from taking their jobs while they are out on strike. Union negotiations with employers about the terms of employment and working conditions are coordinated through collective bargaining in which contract decisions between management and union representatives must be mutually agreed upon rather than imposed unilaterally.

Unions have a long history in the United States. At various times they have existed on the margins of society and been vigorously opposed by capitalists and other free-market supporters. Unions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were brutally suppressed by capitalists, and union organizers were frequently arrested and jailed. Often they were charged with conspiracy because attempts to form unions were illegal for much of American history. The Typographical Union (representing print typesetters), which formed in 1852, is usually considered the "first durable national organization of workers" in the United States. By 1881 a number of smaller labor groups had banded together to form the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which eventually became the AFL-CIO (by adding the groups in the Congress of Industrial Organizations).

Unions of this era fought for a variety of workplace reforms. During the 1912 textile mill strikes in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the workers' slogan was "bread and roses," emphasizing their desire for something more than wages sufficient to survive. Unions also led campaigns to end child labor, establish an eight-hour workday and a five-day work week, and to increase workplace safety. For this reason unions are still sometimes referred to as "the people who brought you the weekend." Before the eight-hour workday was instituted, many workers literally didn't see the sun because they went to work before daybreak and left after dark. It is not surprising that many were willing to fight for unionization even in the face of extreme opposition.

In 2007 approximately 16 million American workers belonged to a union organization (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008e). However, union membership has been in steep decline since its peak in the 1950s. In 1955 approximately 35 percent of the labor force was unionized; by 2004 fewer than 13 percent of the workforce belonged to a union. In the 1950s an average of 352 major strikes occurred each year; by the early 2000s that number had fallen to fewer than 30 (Commission for Labor Cooperation 2003).

Perhaps the first major blow to union strength came with the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 that instituted limitations on secondary strikes and boycotts, established restrictions on picketing, and allowed the federal government to force strikers back to work during "cooling-off periods" that not only gave workers time to reconsider but also gave businesses time to gather resources to counteract a strike. After Taft-Hartley, various states passed so-called right-to-work laws that prohibited "closed shops," workplaces where all employees had to be members of the union. Supporters say that workers should be free to decide whether to join a union; opponents argue that all employees who benefit from

collective bargaining should help to support the union that represents the workers.

The laws regarding union activity were one part of larger social changes that have occurred over the last 50 years and have diminished the power of unions in the United States. Between 1945 and 1973 the economy grew rapidly, and as long as wages and benefits continued to rise, the perceived need for unions waned. However, in the 1970s the economy entered a serious decline, and American corporations found it was cheaper to move production overseas to countries whose working conditions were more like those of nineteenth-century than twentieth-century America. As a result, unions have largely changed focus from fighting for better wages and working conditions to keeping jobs in this country.

Industries that leave the United States, referred to as "runaway shops," are mostly in manufacturing, where firms take advantage of cheap labor and lax environmental laws in other countries. But even Hollywood has out-of-country production sites. Many movies purporting to depict American cities like Chicago and New York are actually filmed in Toronto, where labor costs are on average 20 percent lower than in the United States (Cooper 2003). In 1998, 27 percent of U.S. film and television productions were runaway productions (285 out of 1,075)—almost triple the number from just a decade before (Monitor Report 1999). Some 81 percent of these were made in Canada with its cheaper labor and weaker unions. The direct production expenditures lost from the United States were estimated at $2.8 billion for 1998 alone.

With a shift in the U.S. economy from manufacturing to the service sector, the only unions to grow since the early 1970s have been public employees' unions. In some instances, service jobs are being moved overseas. But even when jobs remain in the United States, other problems emerge among workers.

When Wal-Mart began opening Supercenters in the late 1990s that included full grocery stores, many industry watchers became fearful that the retail behemoth's wage policies and antiunion stance would force local grocers "to push for drastically lower wages to stay competitive with the new mega-warehouse on the block" (F. Green 2002). As a consequence, union organizers made concerted efforts to organize Wal-Mart employees, only to be met with substantial opposition. Union leaders reported that Wal-Mart maintained a "hit list" of employees to be fired because they favor unionization and that in some instances they instructed employees to call the police if organizers tried to contact them. In those rare instances when Wal-Mart employees have voted to unionize, the company has resorted to even more drastic measures. In 2002, after the butchers at the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Jacksonville, Texas, voted to join the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), the company decided to eliminate the meat cutters in their Texas stores and buy precut meat from their suppliers.

The 1997 strike by UPS drivers was widely hailed as the beginning of a comeback for organized labor. It was the biggest strike in more than a decade, with 185,000 workers walking picket lines for 15 days before a new contract was



Victory for All Workers? The Hollywood writers' strike of 2007–8, in which over 3,500 Writers Guild of America members "walked out" on the TV and movie industries, was successful in gaining residual or royalty pay for writers when TV shows and movies are distributed on the internet.

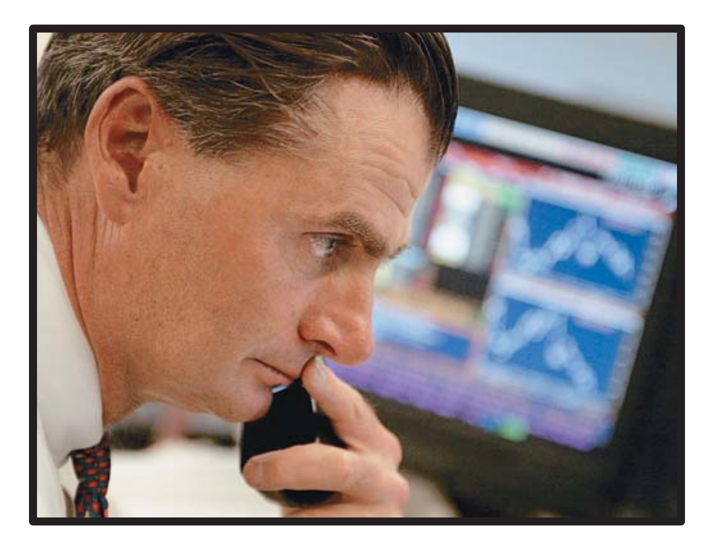
signed. Shortly after the settlement, Ron Carey, then president of the Teamsters labor union, declared this is "not just a Teamster victory, this is a victory for all working people" (Roberts and Bernstein 2000). The Teamsters emphasized that their first concern was the increasing number of part-time jobs without benefits, a concern that large numbers of Americans shared. However, the UPS strike was relatively unique and unlikely to be repeated by other unions. Not only does UPS offer a service that can't be moved outside the country, but its workers also have good rapport with the customers, which may help to explain why public support for the union was so high. UPS has traditionally been a labor-friendly, worker-owned corporation, with a number of top executives who started out as drivers. Additionally, UPS is the overwhelming market leader in the parcel delivery business, which decreases the pressure for top executives to cut costs. Competitors like Federal Express aren't unionized, emphasizing the extent to which the service sector has succeeded in resisting unionization.

The successful UPS strike may still encourage other workers to pursue unionization. Despite several decades of decline in union power, the recognition of workers' rights, including the right to organize, continues to be a feature of the American economic system. Shortly after the UPS strike ended, Nelson Lichtenstein, a professor of history specializing in labor issues, predicted, "Right now discussions are going on in executive offices in Wal-Mart, Kmart, Federal Express, all these labor intensive service firms, about how to rethink their labor strategy" (Greenhouse 1997). Whether such collective resistance strategies become more prevalent again in the future remains to be seen.

The Best of Corporate America

From a Weberian perspective, we can see that large bureaucracies laden with rules and procedures can deprive employees of a sense of autonomy, individuality, and control. From a Marxist perspective, we can see how large capitalist corporations sometimes exploit their workers and cause alienation and that their power hierarchies often exclude women and minorities. These criticisms are true in the aggregate—money, power, and influence converge in corporate America, and with these forms of power come opportunities for exploitation and abuse. But not all corporations are evil, and sometimes we see major corporate players transcend self-interest and act with great altruism.

Compared to the big firms like Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs, Sandler O'Neill and Partners is a tiny



Jimmy Dunne In the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center, Sandler O'Neill & Partners lost 66 of its 171 employees, including two of its three founders. Jimmy Dunne, the surviving founder, consoled the company's other survivors and inspired them to rebuild the company.

investment brokerage firm. It was located on the 104th floor of the World Trade Center in New York, and on September 11, 2001, it was devastated in the terrorist attacks. Sixty-six of its 171 employees died in the towers, all of their equipment and business information was destroyed, and only one of the senior partners survived. That partner, Jimmy Dunne, immediately began what seemed like an impossible task: address overwhelming grief, rebuild the company, and take care of the families of all 66 lost employees.

Within a matter of days, Dunne had set up shop in temporary offices (donated by Bank of America). Sandler O'Neill began trading again, but without the knowledge or experience of the employees it had lost. And in what constitutes a miracle in corporate America, its competitors began to help out. Stockbrokers from other companies started calling in market information to Sandler O'Neill's inexperienced traders. A retired vice president from Goldman Sachs just showed up one day and started volunteering at the equity desk. Major investment brokerages like Merrill Lynch and J. P. Morgan Chase cut Sandler O'Neill in on their deals, just so the crippled company could earn a portion of the commission. And Sandler O'Neill needed every penny it could get its hands on: Dunne had paid out the full year's salary and benefits to the families of all the dead employees and had guaranteed year-end bonuses as well.

These powerhouse investment brokerages—ordinarily in a position to squash a tiny firm like Sandler O'Neill—suspended their rivalries to get another corporation and its devastated employees back in the game. They shared office space, information, workers, deals, and commissions with a competitor. They subverted their own bureaucratic

rules and the imperatives of capitalist competition to help a struggling company survive. And it did: Sandler O'Neill was profitable again before the end of 2001 and had the necessary funds to continue supporting the families of its lost staff members. Granted, September 11 created extraordinary circumstances, and many people and organizations rose to the challenge of this national tragedy. But the case of Sandler O'Neill shows that corporate competitors can become collaborators and provide support. Corporate America is, after all, populated by human beings.

Globalization, Economics, and Work

Globalization describes the cultural and economic changes that have occurred as a result of dramatically increased international trade and exchange in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Although there has always been some global economic trade—East Asia's ancient spice and silk trade routes and the sixteenth-century English and Dutch shipping empires are early examples of this—the effects of globalization have become more highly visible since the 1970s. Globalization has been fostered through the development of international economic institutions; innovations in technology; the movement of money, information, and people; and infrastructure that supports such expansion. Today, it is possible to view the world as having one global economy, with huge corporations whose production processes span national borders, international regulatory bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), and transnational trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) redefining economic relationships between and among nations.

Supporters of globalization believe that "free trade" can lead to more efficient allocation of resources, lower prices, more employment, and higher output, with all countries involved in the trade benefiting. Critics believe that free trade promotes a self-interested corporate agenda and that powerful and autonomous multinational corporations can exploit workers and increasingly shape the politics of nation-states.

International Trade: Shallow and Deep Integration

To explain economic globalization, social scientists have used the terms *shallow integration* and *deep integration* (Dicken 1998). Shallow integration refers to the flow of goods and services that characterized international trade until several decades ago. In a shallow integration model, a national company would arrange with a foreign company to either import or export products but exclusively within that single nation's economy. For example, not even 30 years ago, a Japanese car would have been made almost entirely in Japan, and a pair of American jeans would have been made in the United States. Thus Japan would export cars to the United States, which would import Japanese cars. And the United States would export jeans to Japan, which would import American jeans. To protect their interests, nations would impose taxes on imports, sometimes making those imports more expensive to buy than similar products made at home.

globalization the cultural and economic changes resulting from dramatically increased international trade and exchange in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries

Deep integration refers to the global flow of goods and services in today's economy. While companies still make arrangements with other companies for imports and exports, their relationships are far more complex. Most significantly, companies are no longer national; they are multinational, with major decision-making, production, and/or distribution branches of a particular company spread all over the world. When we look at the labels on our clothing, the global nature of their origin is often concealed. The label may say "Made in . . . ," but the raw materials or other parts may have originated somewhere else.

When nations make laws to protect national economic interests, they must often do so with a host of other nations in mind. NAFTA is an excellent example of this complex web of global relationships. Many major apparel companies, such as Nike or the Gap, have marketing and design headquarters in the United States but their garment factories are in Mexico, another country in NAFTA. Under NAFTA, American companies can avoid paying taxes when they export raw materials to Mexico and then import the finished products. These global trade agreements often benefit private industry much more than they do nations.

Transnational Corporations

Transnational corporations (TNCs) are another part of the global economy. These firms purposefully transcend national borders so that their products can be manufactured, distributed, marketed, and sold from many bases all over the world. We may think of companies like Coca-Cola or General Electric as quintessentially American, but they are more accurately understood as global or transnational corporations. What is distinctive about today's TNCs is the way they shape the global economy. In the past 50 years, they have experienced unprecedented growth in both numbers of firms and amount of economic impact.

sweatshop a workplace where workers are subject to extreme exploitation, including below-standard wages, long hours, and poor working conditions that may pose health or safety hazards

The United Nations 2006 list of "The World's Top 100 Non-Financial TNCs" assigns firms a "transnationality index" by assessing the ratios between foreign employment and total employment, foreign investments and total investments, and foreign sales and total sales (UNCTAD 2007). In their 2006 listing, the top five "transnational" firms included four U.S. firms: General Electric (1), Exxon Mobil (5), Ford Motor Co. (6), and Wal-Mart (10). Just over half the workforce is foreign at both General Electric and Ford—with Exxon coming in at almost two-thirds and Wal-Mart at just over one-quarter. All of these firms are marketed strongly as "American" brands, yet they are clearly global institutions.

Table 12.1 shows how much economic influence TNCs exert in the global economy. Among the top 40 global economies, ranked by either Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or total sales, there are eight TNCs. Firms such as Wal-Mart and BP (British Petroleum) actually rank higher than the nations of South Africa, Argentina, and Ireland. When we consider that firms have the economic weight of nations, we can understand just how much political clout TNCs wield in terms of global governance. For instance, an American TNC can exercise powerful influence by donating huge amounts of money to lobbyists and political campaigns. Further, in international regulatory bodies, such as the WTO, TNCs are often able to influence trade law at a global level.

Another manifestation of the ever-increasing economic power of TNCs is competition in the global market. Because TNCs can take advantage of cheap pools of labor by either relocating their own factories or outsourcing, nations compete with each other for these contracts by undercutting their citizens' wages and offering incentives such as tax-free zones. Scholars, politicians, activists, and commentators have called this the "race to the bottom." These kinds of policies hurt the local populations, often depriving workers of decent wages and the potential benefits, such as schools and hospitals, that would have been derived from taxes.

Global Sweatshop Labor

One way the race to the bottom hurts workers in their own countries is by creating an environment where sweatshop labor can exist. A **sweatshop** is a workplace where workers are subjected to extreme exploitation, including below-standard wages, long hours, and poor working conditions that may pose health or safety hazards. Sweatshop workers are often intimidated with threats of physical discipline and are prevented from forming unions or other workers' rights groups. Historically, sweatshops originated during the Industrial Revolution as a system where middlemen earned profits from the difference between what they received for delivering on a contract and the amount they paid to the workers who produced the contracted goods. The profit was said to be "sweated" from the workers, because they received minimal wages and worked excessive hours under unsanitary and dangerous conditions.

Sweatshops, however, are not a thing of the past. Unfortunately, there are many in the world today making large numbers of the goods that we unknowingly consume. Though perhaps more prevalent overseas, sweatshops exist in the United States as well. The General Accounting Office defines a sweatshop as "an employer that violates more than one federal or state labor law governing minimum wage and overtime, child labor, industrial homework, occupational safety and health, workers compensation, or industrial regulation" (Ross 1997, p.12). The Department of Labor estimated



Are Sweatshops Good or Bad? While workers sew at *maquilas*, or sweatshops, such as this one in Guatemala City, Guatemala, students like Christine Hoffmann, left, and Bradley Heinz, right, at Stanford University are calling on universities to ensure that apparel bearing their school's logo is made in factories where workers are paid a living wage.

TABLE 12.1 Top Forty Economies Ranked by GDP and Total Sales, 2007

RANKING	NATION/FIRM	GDP/SALES (IN MILLIONS $US)
1	United States	13,811,200
2	Japan	4,376,705
3	Germany	3,297,233
4	China	3,280,053
5	United Kingdom	2,727,806
6	France	2,562,288
7	Italy	2,107,481
8	Spain	1,429,226
9	Canada	1,326,376
10	Brazil	1,314,170
11	Russian Federation	1,291,011
12	India	1,170,968
13	Korea, Rep.	969,795
14	Mexico	893,364
15	Australia	821,716
16	Netherlands	754,203
17	Turkey	657,091
18	Belgium	448,560
19	Sweden	444,443
20	Indonesia	432,817
21	Poland	420,321
22	Switzerland	415,516
23	Norway	381,951
24	Saudi Arabia	381,683
25	Wal-Mart Stores	378,799
26	Austria	377,028
27	Exxon Mobil	372,824
28	Greece	360,031
29	Royal Dutch Shell	355,782
30	Denmark	308,093
31	BP	291,438
32	South Africa	277,581
33	Iran	270,937
34	Argentina	262,331
35	Ireland	254,970
36	Finland	246,020
37	Thailand	245,818
38	Toyota Motor	230,201
39	Venezuela	228,071
40	Portugal	220,241

Data on GDP: World Bank 2008
Data on firms: *Fortune* 2008b

Global Perspective

Sweatshop Labor and "Gold Farming" in China

Many people are familiar with the concept of sweatshops, where cheap labor is exploited to make clothing and goods for people in industrialized nations. While individuals are able to understand easily how labor can be exploited for the production of material goods, a more difficult concept to grasp is how labor can be exploited in the market for virtual goods. Rather than working long hours under inhuman conditions for little pay in order to produce luxury items such as Nikes and Levi's, "gold farmers" are exploited in order to create the ultimate luxury product—status in an online computer game.

The Real World is the title of your textbook and a long-running MTV reality show. In cyberspace, the term *real world* is also used to differentiate life outside the online "virtual world." Some of the most popular forms of virtual worlds are Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs) such as *World of Warcraft*, *Ultima Online*, and *Everquest*. *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) is the most popular of these games, with approximately 10.9 million monthly subscribers as of 2008. As with many MMORPGs, players make an initial investment to purchase the software for the game, and they are also charged a monthly subscription fee in order to play. In *WoW*, players use a character avatar through which they explore the virtual world, complete quests, and interact with other players or nonplayer characters (NPCs). Quests are assignments given by an NPC (who is programmed into the game) that usually involve killing a monster, gathering resources, transporting an item from one location to another, or finding a difficult-to-locate object. Successful quests are rewarded with in-game money and experience points that a character can spend to buy new skills and equipment. As with most MMORPGs, there is an emphasis on character improvement. Because of the interactive nature of *WoW*, advancing in the game isn't just a matter of personal achievement but also a matter of reputation and status in the community.

"Gold farms" profit from the importance of advancement in an MMORPG. According to estimates, around 100,000 people in China are employed as "gold farmers," making $120 to $250 (U.S.) per month playing *WoW* for 12- to 18-hour shifts. These Chinese gold farmers carry out in-game actions so that they can earn virtual money to buy equipment, skills, and status. These virtual assets are sold to real (recreational) players for real world money, creating a unique intersection of virtual and real world economies. Literally, a player can spend real world money to buy status and reputation in an online game. Since many of the beginning levels of *WoW* involve spending long hours doing repetitive and dull virtual tasks, the idea of being able to bypass this tedium to start at more advanced levels appeals to many players. Creating characters requires time and effort that players who use the services of gold farmers are unable or unwilling to devote to the game. So they buy the labor of gold farmers to advance their gaming strategies.

Many of the critiques of manufacturing sweatshops can be applied to the gold farming phenomenon. Gold farmers labor for the benefit of middle-class gamers in industrialized nations. Ge Jin, a PhD student at the University of California in San Diego, documents working conditions in the gold farming "sweatshops," where he has filmed workers crowded into an airport hangar, bleary eyed, chain-smoking, and sleeping two to a single mat on the floor (Jin, forthcoming). Are bad jobs better than no jobs? Certainly it is easier to live in most of modern society with money than without. Though most people in developed nations would view $3 a day as extremely low pay, in impoverished communities "$1 or $2 a day can be a life-transforming wage" (Kristof and WuDunn 2000). While there are those who argue that playing a computer game takes less of a physical toll than subsistence farming or factory work, it is evident that there is an imbalance between the amount of money that workers are paid to produce these virtual resources and the prices that gamers pay to buy them. The sum of $200 can

that in 2001 there were over 7,000 sweatshops in U.S. cities such as New York, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Chicago, Philadelphia, and El Paso. American companies may also manufacture goods overseas using foreign sweatshop labor. Nike and the Gap, and clothing lines associated with Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen and Sean "Diddy" Combs, have all been charged with using sweatshop labor in Southeast Asia, Central America, and elsewhere and have been pressured to reform their practices.

Many universities purchase their logo apparel from manufacturers that use sweatshop labor. In 1999, students at the University of Michigan, University of North Carolina,



Chinese Gold Farmers How has the popularity of online games such as *World of Warcraft* led to new forms of sweatshops?

the services of gold farmers affect the virtual economy by driving up the prices of the rarest items. Traditional players then become resentful, as these price increases require them to work longer to acquire items that players with real world cash can purchase with little effort. On the other hand, does playing a game qualify as work? After all, it is "only a game."

Strategies for retaliation against players identified as gold farmers include verbal harassment inside the game. Rather than taking out their anger and frustrations on the gold farm brokers who benefit from the process, some traditional players will follow suspected gold farmers within the game and bombard them with racist comments. Gamers have put together racist videos to post on YouTube, venting their anger over the gold farming phenomenon. Gold farming then becomes a matter not just of class and economics but also of race and racism.

Are gold farms good or bad? Are bad jobs better than no jobs at all? Should the virtual world be free of the corruption of the real world? Are gamers just too invested in their games? These are all questions to ask when pondering the intersections of the virtual world and real world that collide in the gold farming sweatshops.

buy 500 pieces of online gold in *WoW*, which would take an estimated 100 hours of playing to earn.

The gaming world is up in arms about the gold farming phenomenon. While some gamers find that the opportunity to buy gold augments their playing experience, other gamers hold that buying from gold farmers confers an unfair advantage to those with expendable income. Purists argue that MMORPGs should be free of the corruption of the real world and that escapism is not possible with people buying status and reputation in the virtual world. Players who use

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Duke University, and Georgetown University staged sit-ins to pressure their respective administrators into agreeing to fully disclose factory conditions and wages paid to workers who produce university apparel. Other similar campaigns were launched at Seattle Community College in 2004 and systemwide at the University of California in 2005 to change university purchasing policy to allow for preferences for union-made and verifiably sweatshop-free products (Greenhouse 1999). We encourage you to do your own research on whether sweatshop products have reached the stores where you shop—or even your own closet—in completing the next Data Workshop.



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Are Your Clothes Part of the Global Commodity Chain?

You probably own and consume a large number of products that originated in faraway countries, including your car, clothing, or shoes. These items have traveled widely during the process from production to consumption. Food, pharmaceuticals, and electronics are other examples of globally made products. Social scientists call these international movements of goods "global commodity chains" (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994).

Global commodity chains are networks of corporations, product designers and engineers, manufacturing firms, distribution channels (such as ocean freightliners, railroads, and trucking firms), and consumer outlets (such as Wal-Mart). Global commodity chains start with a product design and brand name and end with the consumer making a purchase. But between start and finish is often a complex global process with many different people, in many different nations, all contributing to the final product.

The manufacturing of goods, from garments to electronics to automobiles, used to happen in the United States and other Western nations; today's manufacturing centers are primarily located in poorer nations, such as the Philippines, China, Indonesia, and many Latin American countries. American corporations such as Nike, the Gap, and Levi-Strauss have closed all their U.S. manufacturing plants and hired contractors and subcontractors from East Asia and Latin America to make their products at substantially lower prices. Now these companies focus large amounts of financial resources on "branding" their products (Klein 1999). Branding is the process, usually through advertising, by which companies gain consumers' attention and loyalty. Much of the money you pay for some products goes toward financing these branding campaigns, while a much smaller sum pays the workers who actually make the products.

The following three exercises will help you to understand where the things that you buy come from and the increasing disparity between product values and workers' wages.

Exercise One: The Global Closet
Pick out five to ten items of clothing from your closet. Now check the labels. Where were your clothes made? Make a list of the nations represented in your closet. How many nations are from East Asia or Latin America? Is there a difference between where an item is made and where it is assembled? Does the label indicate where the fabric originated?

Exercise Two: No Longer "Made in the U.S.A."
Ask your parents, aunts or uncles, or grandparents if you can look at the labels of their older clothes. Or go to a thrift store and look for older or vintage clothes there. Again pick out five to ten items of clothing. How many of those items were made in the United States? Compare your answers in Exercise 1 and Exercise 2. What does this tell you about the globalization of the garment manufacturing industry over the past 50 years?

Exercise Three: Are Your Favorite Brands "Sweat Free"?
List your favorite brands of clothing, shoes, or other fashion accessories. What is your brand's stance on sweatshop labor? Do workers who make your favorite products earn a living wage? You can check many corporations' ethics regarding labor conditions by doing some research on the internet. See how your brands score at the following websites:

CorpWatch: www.corpwatch.org

Global Exchange: www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/sweatshops

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility: www.iccr.org

National Labor Committee for Workers' and Human Rights: www.nlcnet.org

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Choose one of the exercises above and follow the instructions as outlined. Bring notes to class to discuss with others in small groups. Your instructor may organize groups so that all members have done the same exercise or all members have done a different exercise. In either case, compare your findings with those of other members of the group.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Choose one or more of the exercises above (or your instructor may assign specific exercises) and follow the instructions as outlined. Write a three- to four-page essay analyzing your findings.

Outsourcing

The U.S. economy is increasingly affected by globalization, and as a result, American companies have sought out new business models to reduce costs and remain competitive.

One increasingly popular approach is outsourcing or off-shoring. **Outsourcing** involves "contracting out" or transferring to another country the labor that a company might otherwise have employed its own staff to perform. Typically a company's decision to outsource is made for financial reasons and is usually achieved by transferring employment to locations where labor is cheap. In 1992, U.S. firms employed 7 million workers in other countries (O'Reilly 1992); but with technological advances, particularly the internet, over the past decade or more, businesses have been able to increase their foreign employment pool significantly at a minimum cost.

Information technology–producing industries, such as data entry, communication services, communication equipment, computer hardware, and software and computer services, are the main jobs involved in outsourcing. Although countries such as China, the Philippines, and Eastern Europe are also key sites, India has been the primary location for outsourcing because of the shared English language and cheap employment. A company can hire an engineer in India for $10,000 a year compared to $60,000–$90,000 in the United States. In 2005, India controlled some 44 percent of the global offshore outsourcing market for software and back-office services, with revenues worth over $17 billion (Associated Press 2005).

The economic benefits of outsourcing are gained by businesses, but the drawbacks are felt by the labor pool. Between 2001 and 2004, some 403,300 information technology jobs were lost in the United States due to outsourcing (Associated Press 2004). Some companies required their employees to train their off-shore replacements, after which the American employees were fired. A 2003 study conducted by the University of California–Berkeley warned that as many as 14 million Americans held jobs at risk of being outsourced (Bardhan and Kroll 2003). This affects not only those already in the workforce but those who are about to enter. Many new college graduates with high-tech degrees are faced with large-scale lack of employment in the United States.

While outsourcing is practiced by the majority of U.S. businesses, they are often reluctant to fully disclose details. International Business Machines (IBM) is a major information technology company that manufactures and sells computer hardware, software, and services. IBM would not say exactly how many workers it had hired under outsourcing agreements, how many it laid off, or how many jobs were moved offshore, but in 2004 the vice president of human resources stated that 3,500 to 4,500 IBM jobs would be relocated from developed nations to emerging countries (Bulkeley 2004). Financial considerations are typically the reason a company decides to outsource, leaving anxious workers with a lack of job security.

Alternative Ways of Working

There are alternative ways of working, not all of which fit into typical categories of work. First we look at professional socialization, the process by which new members learn and internalize the norms and values of their group, examining case studies of workers in three unusual fields. Then we examine the contingent workforce—those who work in positions that are temporary or freelance or who work as independent contractors. Finally, there are the nonprofit corporations—private organizations whose missions go beyond the bottom-line—and volunteerism, the work of people who seek no compensation for their investment of time and energy.

Professional Socialization in Unusual Fields

Every new job requires some sort of training for the prospective employee. Anyone in a new position confronts an unfamiliar set of expectations and workplace norms that must be learned so the new person can fit into the environment. This process, called professional socialization (see Chapter 5 for a review), involves learning not only the social role but also the various details about how to do the job. Several sociological studies have explored the process of professional socialization focusing on medical students (Fox 1957; H. Becker et al. 1961; Haas and Shaffir 1977, 1982), teachers (Lortie 1968), clergy (Kleinman 1984), nurses (Stimson 1967), social workers (Loseke and Cahill 1986), and lawyers (Granfield 1992).

Spencer Cahill's study of students preparing to become funeral directors focused on the practical skills developed by mortuary science students and the emotional labor (see Hochschild 1983) involved in this occupation. Most social interaction within the mortuary science program revolved around death; as a result, students learned how to engage in the practice of "normalizing talk." "Mortuary science education requires students to adopt an occupational rhetoric and esoteric language that communicate professional authority and a calm composure towards matters

outsourcing "contracting out" or transferring to another country the labor that a company might otherwise have employed its own staff to perform; typically done for financial reasons

On the Job

Internships and Experiential Learning

Someone mentions an internship, and you think . . . what? Bored college students making coffee for the boss? Good-looking medical students on *Grey's Anatomy*? Monica Lewinsky? In fact, internships are an increasingly important part of the college experience. According to the *New York Times* (Altschuler, 2002) more than half of the graduating seniors of 2001 had participated in some sort of experiential learning program during their college careers. At worst, the hapless intern may get really good at adding toner to the copier; at best, an internship can benefit both the intern and the company and may be useful in the long run for everyone involved.

Although most internships come with some compensation, others are unpaid; in either case, you gain valuable work experience. You may arrange an academic internship through your college or university and receive academic credit, or you may set up a nonacademic internship that leaves out the school altogether. Firms of all kinds look for college students to fill some of their employment needs. Of course, there's always the possibility that the work you're assigned as an intern will be mind numbing or pointless, so why bother with an internship?

First and most important, an internship may help you decide what you want to be—or don't want to be—when you graduate. After interning in a state's attorney's office, you may decide that being a lawyer isn't everything you thought it would be but that you would like to work with crime victims in a social service capacity. Even if you are sure about your future career path, you may want to consider branching out in the internships you apply for. You'll gain diverse skills and experience and be exposed to careers you might like just as much. Most Americans don't remain in the same job for their entire working lives, so keeping your options open during college doesn't seem like such a bad idea.

An internship on your résumé is also likely to make you an attractive job candidate. Even if your experience doesn't deal directly with the job you're applying for, having completed an internship demonstrates to potential employers your ability to work hard and manage your time. Almost two-thirds of the students from the class of 2004 who were hired after graduation had participated in an internship (McWilliams 2005). One study of recent graduates showed that those who had held internships during college were paid an average of almost 10 percent more than those without internship experience. In addition, many corporations turn first to their own interns when hiring. Results from a 2004 survey showed that employers offered full-time jobs to 57 percent of students who interned for them (Berggoetz 2005). The entire internship can, in some respects, be viewed as an extended job interview.

There will always be competition for the most prestigious positions, though interning for a big name company doesn't necessarily guarantee a good experience. But even if you decide you'd prefer not to work for that corporation or in that field, the contacts you develop may help you find another position. These are people who are already established in the profession, and a good reference is always valuable when you're in the job market.

Internships work out well for employers too. At the very least, they're getting cheap labor, but more than that, interns can be very beneficial for companies that need a highly educated or highly trained workforce. Taking on young workers can also help a company stay connected to younger consumers and may provide them with some new perspectives and ideas. Corporations also realize that providing internships can create goodwill—from the students who intern with them, from the universities through which the internships are organized, or from the general public.

that most of the lay public finds emotionally upsetting" (Cahill 1999, p. 106). In addition, students were required to control their own emotional responses to the work. "Some students told me that they found 'cases' of young children emotionally disturbing. . . . Yet these students reportedly did 'get used to it,' 'keep it down,' and deal with emotionally distressing 'cases'" (Cahill 1999, pp. 108–9). Cahill found that successful mortuary science students were those who could best deal with the emotional component of the work.

Loren Bourassa and Blake Ashforth studied how inexperienced newcomers are socialized into the work life onboard an Alaskan fishing boat. The occupation of a fisherman differs greatly from other occupations because it requires no previous experience or even a high school education, as physical strength and stamina are the primary prerequisites. Work on a fishing boat pays well for a relatively short amount of time, and this often lures a large number of workers. However, their romantic notions about life on a fishing boat are quickly dispelled. "New workers were indoctrinated collectively by their more experienced coworkers and underwent a process of divestiture. . . . Specifically newcomers were called 'new guys,' rather than by name, were subjected to constant taunts and verbal abuse, were constantly made to perform the least desirable jobs and other odd tasks, were required to obey incessant and often arbitrary instructions, and were routinely denied the privileges given to more experienced members" (Bourassa and Ashforth 1998, p. 181). This intense socialization proved effective as newcomers worked hard and came to understand the culture of the fishing boat workplace. "It became a badge of honor to survive the initiation phase" (Bourassa and Ashforth 1998, p. 189). Yet the fleeting moment of self-satisfaction and positive feelings gave way to the continuous physical demands. Even the promise of economic rewards failed to sustain them. "The money was generally held in bank accounts until the completion of a contract. Workers could not use their money or even hold their paycheck in their hands. Thus, onboard the ship, money remained an abstract and distant notion" (Bourassa and Ashforth 1998, p. 189).

Jacqueline Lewis examined the socialization of exotic dancers where the goal for those entering this field is to become competent at their job. "For exotic dancers, achieving job competence involves getting accustomed to working in a sex-related occupation, and the practice of taking their clothes off in public for money" (J. Lewis 1998, p. 1). On-the-job socialization was essential for the women who entered this line of work. "Similar to the socialization experiences of individuals in other occupations, novice dancers learn through interaction and observation while on the job. . . . Since there is no formal certification structure, peers play an important role in this transformation process" (J. Lewis 1998, p. 5). Lewis found that several women felt the socialization process "inadequately prepared them for some of the realities of the life of an exotic dancer" (J. Lewis 1998, p. 12)—mainly the negative impact it would have on their private lives and the difficulties of having long-term heterosexual relationships with men outside the industry.

While professional socialization occurs on the job, anticipatory socialization is the process of learning the behaviors, expectations, and standards of a role or group to which one aspires but does not yet belong. One way to acquire anticipatory or early professional socialization is to do an internship while you're in college. This chapter's On the Job box describes how internships work and why they are such a valuable learning experience before entering the job market.

The Contingent Workforce: Temps, Freelancers, and Independent Contractors

Traditionally most Americans have hoped to find a job they would keep their whole lives, one that would provide 40-hour work weeks along with vacations and health and retirement benefits. Increasingly this sort of job is becoming rare. A growing percentage of Americans have less steady work arrangements that could be defined as "work that does not involve explicit or implicit contracts for long-term employment" (Bendapudi et al. 2003). These workers are referred to as the contingent workforce. It is made up of four categories: independent contractors, on-call workers, temporary help agency workers, and contract company workers—sometimes called "temps" or "freelancers." Over the last couple of decades contingent work has provided an alternative to long-term, full-time employment and has grown three times faster than traditional jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that approximately 10 percent of the total American workforce in 2005 fell into this category and predicted that by 2010 up to 25 percent would be contingent or part-time (Whitehead 2005).

Many see this situation as a potential disaster, as inferior jobs are created by corporations seeking to slash overhead, especially those costs associated with health benefits, which are almost never available to contingent workers. Employers have a number of financial and legal responsibilities to their regular workers—overtime pay, health insurance, Social Security, disability and worker's compensation benefits—that don't apply to temps or independent contractors. Many fear businesses will increasingly turn to alternative employment arrangements solely to cut costs to the distinct disadvantage of their employees.



Millions of Volunteers

Have you ever donated time or money to a cause that you support? In addition to working in internships and participating in other forms of experiential learning (see "On the Job: Internships and Experiential Learning," p. 366) as a part of their academic careers, students often do community service and volunteer in a wide variety of charitable organizations and nonprofit settings. National Volunteer Week, the third week of April each year, celebrates such people and their efforts to help others.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008f) reports that in 2007 an estimated 60.8 million Americans, or over 26 percent of the total population, engaged in some form of volunteer work. Volunteers spent a median of 52 hours on volunteer activities each during the same year. Women tend to volunteer in larger numbers, such that over 29 percent of all U.S. women and 23 percent of men volunteered in 2007. Men, however, spent more hours in volunteering than women, a median of 52 to 50 hours, respectively. Volunteers are represented fairly evenly from all age groups, though persons 45 to 54 years old were the most likely to volunteer. Volunteer rates were lowest among those in their early twenties (17 percent). Volunteers come from every socioeconomic level, but members of the middle and upper-middle classes are most likely to volunteer. All races and ethnicities are represented as well.

TABLE 12.2 Volunteers by Type of Organization for Which Volunteer Activities Were Performed and Selected Characteristics, 2007

	TOTAL VOLUNTEERS (THOUSANDS)	CIVIC, POLITICAL, PROFESSIONAL, OR INTERNATIONAL	EDUCATIONAL OR YOUTH SERVICE	ENVIRONMENTAL OR ANIMAL CARE
All	60,838	5.1%	26.2%	1.9%
Men	25,724	6.5	24.3	2.0
Women	35,114	4.1	27.5	1.9
16 to 24 years	7,798	3.9	30.8	2.4
25 years and over	53,040	5.3	25.5	1.9
White	52,586	5.2	26.3	2.1
African American	5,010	4.0	24.3	0.6
Asian	1,887	3.4	24.9	0.9
Hispanic	4,279	3.1	34.8	1.4
Less than High School Diploma	2,394	3.3	22.0	0.8
High School Graduates	11,379	4.2	22.3	1.4
Some College	15,468	5.4	25.3	1.7
College Graduates	23,799	6.0	27.5	2.3
Single	12,612	5.0	27.6	2.7
Married	38,876	5.0	26.8	1.7

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008g

Many Americans volunteer at religious organizations to which they belong. Lawyers do "pro bono" work for those who can't afford representation. Veterinarians offer free clinics for homeless persons' animal companions. "Candy-stripers" help patients and their visitors in hospitals. Families serve in soup kitchens during holiday times such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. Every Election Day, neighborhood volunteers organize and staff local voting booths. And college students volunteer in a wide variety of organizations, from tutoring elementary school students and answering rape crisis hotlines to coaching sports teams, caring for animals at local shelters, and helping out at the Red Cross. Table 12.2 shows the types of organizations for which Americans most often volunteered in 2007.

People do volunteer work for many reasons—for social justice, social change, religious values, work experience, participation in clubs and social groups, and even out of boredom. Not only does volunteering satisfy our most altruistic ideals; it can also be a way to enhance our careers, strengthen our relationships with others, and even let us live out fantasies or dreams that are not part of our normal, everyday lives. And in so doing, volunteers help create a different world for themselves and others.

HOSPITAL OR OTHER HEALTH	PUBLIC SAFETY	RELIGIOUS	SOCIAL OR COMMUNITY SERVICE	SPORT, HOBBY, CULTURAL, OR ARTS	OTHER OR UNDETERMINED
7.8%	1.3%	35.6%	13.1%	3.5%	5.4%
5.7	2.3	35.0	13.9	4.2	6.0
9.4	0.6	36.0	12.4	3.1	5.0
8.1	1.3	29.9	13.9	2.8	6.7
7.8	1.3	36.4	13.0	3.6	5.3
8.1	1.5	34.5	13.1	3.7	5.4
5.1	0.2	47.9	11.6	0.9	5.2
7.9	0.4	38.3	12.9	4.4	6.9
6.3	0.6	35.5	10.9	2.6	4.9
5.0	0.8	48.3	13.4	2.0	4.6
6.9	1.9	41.4	13.3	3.3	5.4
8.4	1.6	36.1	13.2	3.4	4.8
8.1	0.9	33.1	12.6	4.1	5.5
9.4	1.3	27.3	15.6	4.0	7.1
6.7	1.3	39.1	11.5	3.3	4.6



"Always Low Prices," at What Cost? In October of 2003, federal agents arrested 245 illegal immigrant workers in 60 different Wal-Mart stores who were employed by the independent contractors that Wal-Mart hired to do its nightly cleaning. The subcontracted employees worked seven days a week and received no overtime pay or benefits from the contractors, who had thus violated overtime, Social Security, and workers' compensation laws.

Sometimes businesses will classify workers as "independent contractors" even though they do the same work in the same place as regular workers. In an infamous example in the late 1990s, Microsoft was forced to pay $97 million to settle a lawsuit alleging it had wrongly classified a group of employees as independent contractors, making them ineligible for benefits. These workers had been hired as freelancers to work on specific projects, but "the workers were fully integrated into Microsoft's workforce, working under nearly identical circumstances as Microsoft's regular employees . . . the same core hours at the same location and the same supervisors as regular employees" (Muhl 2002).

A different, though equally exploitative, tactic was used by the contractors hired to clean Wal-Mart stores. In October 2003, federal agents arrested 245 undocumented workers in 60 different Wal-Mart stores around the country. The workers came from 18 nations but very few of them actually worked for Wal-Mart. Instead they were employed by independent contractors hired by Wal-Mart to do its nightly cleaning (Bartels 2003). Although companies are not responsible for the actions of subcontractors they hire, they can be held responsible if it is proven they knew something illegal was going on. This is especially important when the jobs offered to the illegal aliens are abusive. When contractors hire employees who work seven days a week and receive no overtime pay or benefits, then those contractors are in violation of overtime, Social Security, and workers' compensation laws (Greenhouse 1997). Furthermore, it is much harder for legitimate contractors to win bids for contracts when their competition can offer lower prices by illegally underpaying their workers.

It is not surprising to discover a lack of job satisfaction among temporary workers, mainly clerical and manufacturing workers, and on-call workers, like substitute teachers, construction workers, nurses, and truck drivers (Cohany 1996). Many temporary workers hope they will be able to use their temp job as a springboard to a permanent one, but often this does not happen. However, the flexibility and freedom of alternative work arrangements appeal to a substantial number of workers, such as students, parents with children at home, and retirees. Though the increase in nontraditional employment has many potential negative effects, "there is as much diversity in the characteristics of jobs and workers within each type of employment arrangement, whether traditional or otherwise, as there is between different types of arrangements" (Cohany 1996).

While there is clearly a downside to being a temp or independent contractor, research indicates that there can also be great satisfaction among these freelance workers. Of the four categories tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, independent contractors make up the largest group—almost two-thirds of the total. In contrast to the traditional worker, the occupational profile of the independent contractor is skewed toward several high-skilled fields including writers and artists, insurance and real estate agents, construction

TABLE 12.3 *Theory in Everyday Life*

Perspective	Approach to Work and the Economy	Case Study: Outsourcing of Work
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Different types of work (high prestige and pay to low prestige and pay) are necessary to the economy and have functions that help maintain social order.	Outsourcing is necessary to keep both national and global economies stable in the current market.
CONFLICT THEORY	A stratified labor market creates intergroup conflict—wealthier capitalists may exploit less-powerful workers.	Outsourcing exploits poor and developing nations and laid-off local workers, all while enriching corporations.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Work is central to our self-concept—we are intensely identified with our work, both by ourselves and by others.	Workers whose jobs are outsourced may come to see themselves as worthless and expendable because it seems that others see them that way too.

trade employees, and other technical and computer-related professions. They tend to be better paid than the average worker and prefer their employment situation for the flexibility and freedom it offers (Cohany 1996). However, even in this category, a significant minority, especially women, make less money and are less satisfied with their situation. Some also suffer from alienation, disenchantment, and burnout.

The Third Sector and Volunteerism

Not all corporations seek a profit, nor do all workers get paid a wage for their labor. Numerous organizations engage in social welfare, social justice, and/or environmental services. Typically these are churches, schools, hospitals, philanthropic foundations, art institutions, scientific research centers, and a multitude of others organizations, both permanent and temporary. They are private, rather than government, organizations and devoted to serving the general welfare, not their own financial interests. They are nonprofit organizations, designed to run as cost-effectively as possible and to direct any gains or earnings, above basic operating expenses, back into the causes they support. Together, these organizations and the workers who staff them constitute what social scientists call the **Independent** (or **Third**) **Sector** of the economy.

In 2004, over 900,000 nonprofit organizations were registered with the U.S. Treasury Department and accorded tax privileges. In addition, there may be 2 to 3 million other private nonprofit groups and associations less formal in nature. The Third Sector helps society in a number of ways. First, these organizations play a significant part in the American system of pluralism, operating alongside the first two sectors of government and business while helping to strengthen and make them work better. Although we think of nonprofits, business, and government as separate, they are really interconnected through their impact on public policy. Second, nonprofit organizations deliver a wide range of vital services to millions of people in almost every social category. Last, they are a humanizing force in American society, allowing an important avenue of expression for altruism.

Independent (or **Third**) **Sector** the part of the economy composed of nonprofit organizations; their workers are mission driven, rather than profit driven, and direct surplus funds to the causes they support

The Third Sector represents one of the most distinctive and commendable features of our society. While most nonprofits have some paid employees, they also rely on volunteers to deliver their services to the public. Volunteerism reflects a profound and important American value, that citizens in a democracy have a personal responsibility to serve those in need. Millions of Americans give their time as volunteers every year. The average value of an hour of volunteering in 2004 was estimated to be worth $17.55 (Independent Sector 2005), and the estimated total value of donated hours in 2002 was more than $256 billion.

There are many ways of working—some conventional, some alternative. Not all workers have jobs in traditional fields; not all workers have permanent or full-time jobs; and not all workers do it for a paycheck.

Closing Comments

You may never have imagined that work was such a big part of life. You might have had a job of some kind, but now you probably have a better idea of just how important work is on both a collective and an individual level. It is so important that sociologists have devoted much of their work to studying work. We can be fairly certain that work will remain a major reality in the human experience into the distant future. We hope that you have gained some insight into the structure and meaning of work in your own lives and the lives of others in society.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **The Economy, Work, and Working** Through employment choices, we are linked to global economic structures. The history of work and the economy show trends of increasing efficiency and surplus because of changes in technology and technique. The Agricultural Revolution allowed humans to gradually produce increasingly large food surpluses. This revolution happened slowly compared to the Industrial Revolution, which led to a relatively quick, radical break with the past.

  The factory, the assembly line, the steam engine, and other technological developments allowed much greater quantities of goods to be produced. These technological developments also changed how people lived, encouraging immigration both internationally and from rural areas into cities. The development of the microchip in the 1970s ushered in the Information Revolution, which shifted the

focus of the U.S. economy from manufacturing goods to managing information. The internet, computer networking, and all types of digital media and communications created a need for knowledge workers, who have little to do with the creation of physical goods.

- **Economic Systems: Comparing Capitalism and Socialism** In the industrial and postindustrial world, capitalism and socialism are the primary political economic systems. Pure capitalism relies on supply and demand to regulate the prices of goods and services; it is based on the private ownership of the means of production, and production for profits. A capitalist economy encourages efficiency through new technology, the expansion of markets, and cost cutting, which today means the privatization of basic human services and the tendency to move operations to other countries where labor and production costs are cheaper. Socialism is based on the collective distribution of goods and services to guarantee workers' access to basic resources. All nations' economies have both capitalist and socialist aspects. For example, the capitalist United States has some socialist economic features, including business subsidies, market regulation, and public aid programs.
- **The Nature of Industrial and Postindustrial Work** Before the Industrial Revolution, economic production took place in the household—but the birth of the factory led to the "workplace" and raised new work-related issues. Karl Marx identified the shift from household production to wage-labor and factory work as the source of modern workers' alienation. He argued that when people lose control over the conditions of production, they become alienated and view work as a means to survive rather than a rewarding activity in itself.
- In a postindustrial economy, many workers labor in service positions Some service positions are well paid, but many intensify the alienation that industrial workers felt. Service work involves direct contact with customers, as well as with a manager or supervisor who limits workers' autonomy and control. Some workers in the postindustrial economy have benefited from the Information Revolution—especially those who do knowledge work. Information technology has expanded the number of people who can work from home by allowing them to telecommute, saving time and energy, decreasing pollution, and adding flexibility to work schedules.
- **Individual and Collective Resistance Strategies: How Workers Cope** Some workers, especially in large, bureaucratic organizations, dislike their lack of autonomy on the job, and they may attempt to resist, both individually and collectively. Individual acts of resistance usually involve symbolic gestures that give an individual a sense of control over her environment. To fundamentally change the workplace, however, requires collective forms of resistance, such as unions that can bargain for all employees. Historically, unions fought for both increased wages and better working conditions. In recent years, union activity has sharply declined. After World War II, legal restrictions on strikes and work stoppages sharply limited union power, as have more recent trends toward globalization and the "runaway shop."
- **Globalization, Economics, and Work** The development of international economic institutions has fostered globalization, the cultural and economic changes caused by dramatically increased international trade and exchange. Technological innovations also support globalization by facilitating the movement of money, information, and people worldwide. Although global trade is centuries old, today's global economy is much more deeply integrated, as many companies are multinational and goods are produced in much more complicated ways. Companies constantly search for the cheapest way to produce goods, often involving global commodity chains, outsourcing, and the creation of sweatshops.
- **Alternative Ways of Working** The modern economy is characterized by the diversification of work. The increasingly specialized division of labor means that professional socialization is necessary to orient people to how to do their jobs. The contingent workforce is growing every year as more businesses rely on temps and freelancers, who often would prefer full-time employment. And in a capitalist society, we increasingly rely on a Third Sector made up of nonprofit organizations that take care of necessary but unprofitable social needs.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Think about the jobs you would like to get after you finish college. Do any of them involve directly participating in the production of physical goods?
2. Think about the objects you use every day. How many of them use microchips? How many of them didn't even exist 25 years ago?
3. Thinking of the United States as a capitalist nation with some socialist elements, are there any ways you directly benefit from government intervention in the economy?

4. Marx described four ways that modern wage labor is alienating. Do you think these apply to you and to the job you have or would like to have? If you have a job, would you choose to keep it even if you became independently wealthy?
5. Information technology has changed the workplace in many ways, including increasing numbers of people who telecommute. Have you experienced anything like telecommuting? How about at school? What are the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning?
6. Resistance strategies are ways that workers can assert some degree of autonomy in a workplace that increasingly exerts control and keeps workers under surveillance. What sorts of actions qualify as individual resistance strategies? Have you ever done anything like this?
7. The U.S. General Accounting Office defines a sweatshop as "an employer that violates more than one federal or state labor law governing minimum wage and overtime, child labor, industrial homework, occupational safety and health, workers' compensation, or industrial regulation." How do you think we should define sweatshops in other countries? What sort of working conditions would lead you to stop buying a product as a way to protest the treatment of the people who produced it?
8. Outsourcing involves the "contracting out" or transferring to another country tasks that used to be taken care of in-house. Have you ever noticed this sort of outsourcing? What sorts of jobs get outsourced? How does this practice affect the economy?
9. Almost every job requires some degree of professional socialization. Have you ever experienced anything like this? Did you engage in any anticipatory socialization first?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Clerks. 1994. Dir. Kevin Smith. Miramax Films. A darkly humorous (though R-rated) take on what it means to be a service worker on the bottom rungs of the American economy and the unique challenges of dealing with customers.

The Corporation. 2003. Dir. Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott. Big Picture Media Corporation. A documentary arguing that because the law treats corporations as "persons," we should analyze them the same way we do real people. The film concludes that if viewed this way, corporations are psychopaths, unable to act with a conscience.

Gibson, William. 2003. *Pattern Recognition*. New York: Putnam. This novel uses a plot about a mysterious film being released little by little on the internet as a way of examining the effects of the Information Revolution. The *Economist* called it "not, strictly speaking, a business book—but probably the best exploration yet of the function and power of product branding and advertising in the age of globalization and the internet."

In Good Company. 2005. Dir. Paul Weitz. Universal Pictures. A feel-good corporate movie that gives a humorous, emotional picture of the consequences of a corporate take-over and the real human faculties that come out when the workplace lets people down.

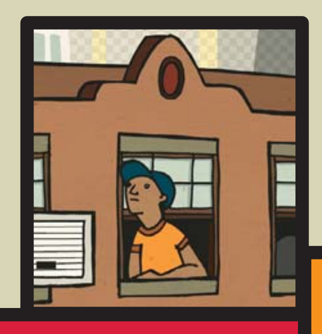
Norma Rae. 1979. Dir. Martin Ritt. 20th Century Fox. Sally Field won an Oscar for her performance as a single mother who struggles to unionize a textile factory. Based on a true story, the movie dramatizes the challenges in convincing individuals that collective resistance can be effective and improve their lives.

Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Hill. In this classic account of the social changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, Polanyi argues that the Great Depression and both World Wars can be viewed as a result of unchecked market capitalism.

Protzman, Ferdinand. 2006. *Work: The World in Photographs*. Washington, DC: National Geographic. This coffee table book celebrates the diverse ways that people in all parts of the world earn a living. The pictures, which span the last 150 years, convey wealth and poverty, pain and violence, joy and triumph, all in the workplace.

Smith, Patti. "Piss Factory." *Land (1975–2002)*. Arista Records. Inspired by her experience as a teenager working in a factory in New Jersey, Smith details in explicit terms the anger and alienation she felt toward the conditions of factory work and her desire to make a living without sacrificing her autonomy.

Von Drehle, David. 2003. *Triangle: The Fire That Changed America*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press. A chilling description of the fire that was New York City's worst disaster until 9/11, as well as an analysis of the social, political, and economic context that gave rise to such dangerous conditions.



CHAPTER 13 Life at Home

Tom, a single doctor in his sixties, lived in the same home for 30 years with three much-loved dogs: two boxers named Blaze and Pepe, and a Boston terrier named Brownie. They were his devoted companions. When one of the dogs died, Tom would get a new dog of the same breed and keep the dog's name. Thus, if Blaze died, the new boxer would be named Blaze; if Brownie died, the new Boston terrier would also be Brownie. Tom's relationship with his dogs went on for 30 years. Are Tom and the dogs a family?

Stacie and Eric met in graduate school and married the year they received their degrees. Their job hunts, however, led them in different directions: Stacie took a job with an international policy agency in Washington, D.C., and Eric went to work for a major corporation in Miami, Florida. Living in their respective cities, they ran up huge phone bills and spent lots of money on weekend plane tickets. After about five years, Stacie became pregnant, and the baby is due in a few months. Are Stacie and Eric a family?

Jeannie and Tammy also met in graduate school—almost 20 years ago. They are both professors in Minneapolis, and together they bought and fixed up an old house. They would like to formalize their commitment to one another, but they cannot do so legally because Minnesota does not allow same-sex partners to marry. Nevertheless, they've adopted a little boy named Conor and are looking forward to celebrating his first Christmas. Are Jeannie, Tammy, and Conor a family?

For some of you, the answers may come easily, but others of you may find yourself wondering—are these groups really families? Tom loves Brownie, Blaze, and Pepe, but can you really be a family if most of your members aren't human? And is Tom's replacement policy similar to or different from the practice of remarrying when a spouse dies? What about Stacie and Eric—they're married and are having a biological child, which seems to make them easily definable as a family. Yet they don't live under the same roof. What does that make them? Even Tom and the dogs live together. And so do Jeannie and Tammy; they can own property together and designate each other as heirs in their wills—though they can't legally marry. They're raising their son Conor together, even though Tammy had to adopt Conor on her own first, and then Jeannie legally became his second parent later, since they could not adopt together like a married heterosexual couple can. Do these complications mean that they aren't a real family?

SocIndex

Then and Now

1950: Average size of a single-family home: 983 square feet

2007: Average size of a single-family home: 2,521 square feet

Here and There

United States: Average number of people per household: 2.6

Pakistan: Average number of people per household: 6.7

This and That

Average cost of a wedding in the United States: $30,000

Average cost for one year at a private university in the United States: $30,000

It all depends on how you define family. If emotional bonds and mutual support are the only criteria, then all of these groups are families. But if a marital bond is required, then only Stacie and Eric are a family. If other legal ties are included, then Tammy, Jeannie, and Conor can be a family too. If you have to be heterosexual, then Jeannie and Tammy are out, and we really don't know about Tom, do we? If the longevity of the relationships is the key, then Tom and the dogs win over both of these other potential families. But if you have to be human and irreplaceable, then all those Brownies, Blazes, and Pepes don't qualify. And if a shared residence must be part of the equation, then Tom and the dogs are in but Stacie and Eric are out. So, how do you define family?

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter, we examine society's most basic social group—the family. Yet what makes a family is subject to debate. Sociology doesn't define a family by who its members are but by what they do, how they relate to one another, and what their relationship is to the larger society. We'll look at the dynamic diversity of family forms in the contemporary United States, the functions of family for society, the hierarchies of inequality that shape family life, the work that gets done by and in families, the kinds of troubles families experience, and the political and cultural controversies that affect family life. You will learn that when it comes to family life, change is the only constant.

What Is the Family?

The U.S. Census Bureau defines family as two or more individuals related by blood, marriage, or adoption living in the same household. This definition is a good starting point, but it's too limited to encompass even the family arrangements described in the opening vignette. Contemporary sociologists use the word **family** to mean a social group whose members are bound by some type of tie—legal, biological, emotional, or a combination of all three. They may or may not share a household, but family members are interdependent and have a sense of mutual responsibility for one another's care. We don't define family by specific types of people (parents or children) or specific types of ties (marriage) because we believe the definition should be broad enough to encompass a variety of forms. However, this very variety is the source of controversy both within and outside academia. Regardless of the definition, most people recognize family as an integral social institution found in every society.

family a social group whose members are bound by legal, biological, or emotional ties, or a combination of all three

extended family a large group of relatives, usually including at least three generations living either in one household or in close proximity

kin relatives or relations, usually those related by common descent

nuclear family a heterosexual couple with one or more children living in a single household

The family as an institution has always changed in response to its social, cultural, political, and economic milieu. Before the Industrial Revolution, *family* tended to mean **extended family**—a large group of **kin**, or relatives, which could include grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins living in one household. After the Industrial Revolution, this configuration was largely superseded by the **nuclear family**—a heterosexual couple in their own household raising children. Along the way, the family moved from a more public social institution to a private one, as many functions formerly associated with the family were transferred to other institutions. For example, work and production moved from the family to the factory, education moved from the family to the school, and government took over a variety of social welfare and medical functions formerly taken care of by the extended family.

Subsequent waves of social change, such as the women's liberation movement and the move toward individual independence and self-fulfillment, have begun to erode the dominance of the nuclear family, as increased divorce rates, working mothers, single parents, gay and lesbian families, and other alternative family arrangements become more common. Many sociologists speak of the sociology not of *the* family but rather of *families*. "Family situations in contemporary society are so varied and diverse that it simply makes no sociological sense to speak of a single ideal-type model of 'the family' at all" (Bernardes 1985 p. 209).

Even though a two-parent household with a stay-at-home mother is no longer the norm, this type of family remains the model by which new forms of the family are judged. However, there are exceptions, as commonsense definitions of the family

reflect the changes occurring in the larger society at any given moment. Children seem to be important in our commonsense definitions, as one study found that unmarried couples, both gay and heterosexual, are more likely to be considered a family if children are present (Powell 2003). Unrelated roommates who are not romantically involved are significantly more likely to be considered family by those over the age of 65:

> I call this the *Golden Girls* effect. . . . People at retirement, on one hand, tend to be very traditional about issues of sexuality, but in terms of what they count as family, they are more likely to accept housemates as a sort of family unit. Their views may be affected by major changes in life, such as a move to a retirement home or a loss of a spouse. (Powell 2003)

Diversity in Families

Artistic representations of the traditional family generally show a mother, a father, and their two children all with the same skin tone and hair color. These pictures reflect a practice called **endogamy** that refers to marrying someone of similar race or ethnicity, class, education, religion, region, or nationality. **Exogamy** refers to marrying someone from a different social group.

As an example of how family forms and definitions change over time, marriage between people of different racial, ethnic, or national background has actually been prohibited for most of the history of the United States. From the time of slavery through the 1960s, mixed-race relationships were considered criminal and were also punished outside the law. Fears of interracial relationships led to the lynching of African American men and the creation of **antimiscegenation** laws in several U.S. states that prohibited the mixing of racial groups through marriage, cohabitation, or sexual interaction (Messerschmidt 1998). The most significant of these laws fell after the 1967 Supreme Court declared that Virginia's law banning marriage between persons of different races was unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment (*Loving v. Virginia* 1967).

Though mixed-race unions are now legal, they are still uncommon but increasing. In 1960, only 0.4 percent of all couples were interracial, increasing to 2.2 percent by 1992 (U.S. Census Bureau 1994), 5.7 percent in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2003), and 7 percent in 2005 (MSNBC 2007). Mixed-race couples still face discrimination; in their analysis of a white supremacist internet chat room, Glaser, Dixit, and Green (2002) found that respondents were far more threatened by interracial marriage than by persons of color moving into white neighborhoods or competing for jobs.

Monogamy, or marrying only one individual at a time, is still considered the only legal form of marriage in modern culture. **Polygamy**, or having multiple spouses, may be practiced among some subcultures around the world, but is not widely acknowledged as a legitimate form of marriage. The more commonly known form of polygamy is **polygyny**, where a man is married to multiple wives. **Polyandry**, where a woman has multiple husbands, has been documented in Tibet but is the rarer form of polygamy.

Sociological Perspectives on the Family

Among the sociological perspectives on the family, those with the structural-functionalist view see it as a cultural universal and try to identify its functions for society. Conflict theorists argue that there are inherent inequalities both within and between families. Symbolic interactionists focus on the family as the product of interactional processes. Each of these theories offers useful insights into our understanding of this unit.

Structural Functionalism

In *Suicide*, Emile Durkheim (1897/1951) argued that the Industrial Revolution and the division of labor had undermined the older social institutions that formerly regulated society, leaving some people suffering from anomie, or normlessness, that sometimes resulted in suicide. He found that marriage and family, at least for men, decreased their chances of suicide because these provide the structure and regulation that Durkheim believed people require to be happy.

The structural-functionalists who followed Durkheim argued that society's survival requires institutions that can serve its essential functions: economic production, the socialization of children, instrumental and emotional support, and sexual control. Although the family is no longer directly involved in economic production, it performs the functions

endogamy marriage to someone within one's social group

exogamy marriage to someone from a different social group

antimiscegenation the prohibition of interracial marriage, cohabitation, or sexual interaction

monogamy the practice of marrying (or being in a relationship with) one person at a time

polygamy a system of marriage that allows people to have more than one spouse at a time

polygyny a system of marriage that allows men to have multiple wives

polyandry a system of marriage that allows women to have multiple husbands



Who Can Marry?

Many people think of marriage as a natural right for everyone. In the United States, though, marriage is a privilege that is generally reserved for two consenting adults of opposite sexes. Historically, marriage in the United States has been restricted at times to citizens, whites, and couples of the same race. Though mixed-race unions are no longer illegal, same-sex marriages are outlawed in most states. In this box, we explore the question: who can marry?

In the United States, marriage is a contract between two people and the government. Thus, married couples enjoy legal privileges such as tax benefits, insurance protections, hospital visitation and decision making, and other legal rights denied to nonmarried couples. Even "common law" marriage (an option in some states in which a period of cohabitation is substituted for legal marriage) is recognized for heterosexual couples only.

In only a few nations in the world—the Netherlands (as of 2001), Belgium (as of 2003), Spain and Canada (as of 2004), and South Africa (as of 2006)—do same-sex couples enjoy all the rights of full legal marriage. Several other nations—including Finland, Norway, Sweden, France, Hungary, Denmark, Israel, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Portugal—and the states of New Jersey, Washington, and Washington, DC, offer some range of legal recognition and protection of same-sex or civil unions (Legal Marriage Alliance of Washington 2007). However, these fall short of the full rights reserved for heterosexual married couples. By 2009, only six states had legally recognized same-sex marriage: Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Gay rights activists believe that the momentum is in their favor, as at least eight other states were then poised to consider legislation that would allow gay couples to marry (Goodnough 2009). Opponents, however, have been successful in defeating some same-sex measures, and continue to launch legal and constitutional challenges to the practice.

In February 2004, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom began issuing marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples, and over 3,000 couples came from around the country and the world to avail themselves of what proved to be a narrow legal window. On August 12, 2004, the California Supreme Court nullified all those marriages and declared them to be in violation of state law. Later, in June 2008, another state Supreme Court decision legalized gay marriage again in California, but in November of that year voters narrowly approved a state constitutional amendment banning marriage between same-sex individuals.

The legal battles over this issue continue in California and other states. In October of 2008, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that to prohibit gay marriage was

that allow production to happen. Talcott Parsons (1955) argued that "the modern nuclear family was especially complementary to the requirements of an industrial economy" because it freed individuals from onerous obligations to extended family members and made possible the geographic and social mobility demanded by the modern economy (Mann et al. 1997). In the most basic sense the family is responsible for the reproduction of society as it produces and socializes children. This is what Parsons referred to as "pattern maintenance," whereby the values and norms of a society are passed on to the next generation. Family also, ideally, provides emotional support for its members and regulates sexuality by helping define with whom we can and cannot mate. These patterns, according to functionalists, help society run smoothly and maintain stability and order.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists realize that the family produces and socializes children to function efficiently in a capitalist economy, but they see this function as problematic. The nuclear family, a relatively recent historical invention, acts as the primary economic unit in modern capitalist society, and since conflict theorists see capitalism as oppressive, they claim that this form of family contributes to that oppression—and is often



Who Gets to Marry? Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell (left) from Toronto are the first North American gay couple to be married. They embrace after the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed the legality of same-sex marriage in December 2004. Baljit Kaur and Raljwinder Kaur (right) from Amritsar, India, embrace after their wedding in India. Gay and lesbian couples throughout India are increasingly open about their sexuality and same-sex marriages are becoming increasingly common there.

unconstitutional. Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, Nebraska, and Missouri have passed constitutional amendments explicitly limiting marriage to heterosexual couples. The 1996 U.S. congressional Defense of Marriage Act was also designed to reserve marriage for heterosexual couples only, and President George W. Bush was reelected in 2004 partly on his promise to amend the Constitution to prohibit gay marriage. Though some public attitudes seem to be shifting toward growing acceptance of gay marriage, not everyone is welcoming the change—including many public officials.

understood as an oppressive institution in itself. Conflict theorists believe that society revolves around conflict over scarce resources and that conflict within the family is also about the competition for resources: time, energy, and the leisure to pursue more interesting recreational activities.

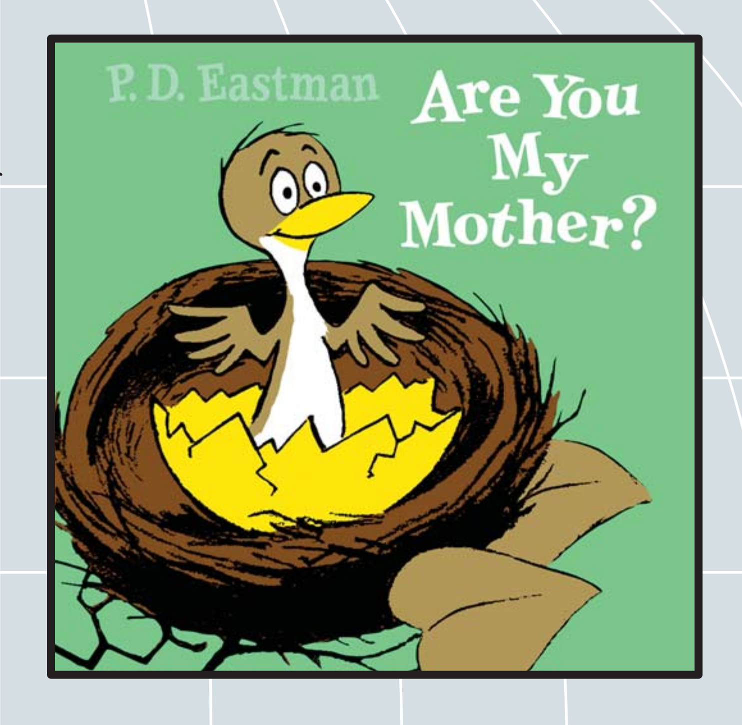
In this analysis, the family can allow exploitation through a sexual rather than a class-based division of labor. Conflict perspectives overlap with feminist perspectives on the family as feminists assume that the family is a gendered social institution and that men and women experience family differently. In patriarchal societies, men wield greater power than women, both within and outside the family, and women's contributions to family and society are devalued (Thorne 1992).

Symbolic Interactionism

As Jim Holstein and Jay Gubrium point out in their book *What Is Family* (1990), the *family* does not exist, only *families*. These symbolic interactionists consider it more effective to look at how family relations are created and maintained in interaction than how they are structured. Even though the legal bond of marriage has the same technical meaning for every couple, individual marriages may have very different expectations and rules for behavior. One couple may require sexual monogamy within their marriage, while their neighbors may not; one couple may pool their finances while another husband and wife may keep separate bank accounts. This approach

Global Perspective

Talking About Kin



In P. D. Eastman's children's book *Are You My Mother?* a newly hatched bird wanders about asking everyone—and everything—she encounters, "Are you my mother?" Sadly for the newborn, neither the construction crane, the cow, nor the cat is the parent she is searching for. On the last page of the book, however, the tiny bird is serendipitously returned to her nest and reunited with a maternal-looking chickadee.

When reading something like *Are You My Mother?* most people in the Western world would assume that the word *mother* means "female parent." However, in the Hawaiian language, *makuahine* means both "mother" and "aunt" and refers to any female relative in the generation of that person's parents (*makuakane* is the equivalent term for men) (Stanton 1995; Schwimmer 2001). In Hawaiian, then, "are you my mother?" could just as easily mean "are you my father's brother's wife?" In China, though, kinship terms are very precise. There are particular terms for a "father's brother's wife" that vary depending on whether the brother's wife is married to the older brother or a younger one (Levi-Strauss 1969)!

One reason we name our kin is to delineate the relationships and obligations we share. In some cases, we use the term **fictive kin** to refer to people who are not related to us through blood or through marriage. Such kin are created through closely knit friendships to the family. You may have a family friend you call Auntie So-and-So. In other societies fictive kin may be culturally prescribed. In Jordan it is perfectly normal for adult strangers to address one another with the Arabic equivalents of brother/sister, maternal aunt/uncle, and paternal aunt/uncle. In addition, an older Jordanian woman may affectionately refer to a child (of either gender) as "mother" (Farghal and Shakir 1994).

In China, labeling an older individual as an uncle or an older brother is a required sign of respect (Baker 1979). Sometimes fictive kin ties are formalized through ceremony, as when a female in India ties a sacred thread around the wrist of an unrelated close male friend to indicate that she considers him a brother. In Latin America, godparents (*compadrazgo*, a word that can be translated as "coparent" rather than "godparent") are considered permanent members of their godchildren's family. Not surprisingly, the Spanish words for "daughter" and "son" are very close to the words for "goddaughter" and "godson" (Davila 1971; van den Berghe 1979).

Examining kin terms is one way to understand the diversity of families and how kin fulfill their social roles. As you can see, aunts, elder brothers, godparents, and family friends can all be important family members.

conceives of family as a fluid, adaptable set of concepts and practices that people use "for constructing the meaning of social bonds" (Holstein and Gubrium 1995b), a set of vocabularies to describe particular relationships.

Consider the number of relatives, defined by blood or marriage, most people have who play no meaningful role in their lives, who "aren't really family." When we describe people in terms of family we are making claims about the "rights, obligations, and sentiments" that exist within their relationships (Gubrium and Buckholdt 1982). Consequently we are constantly evaluating and reevaluating the attitudes and behaviors of those around us, assigning family status to new people and dismissing others from our circle of meaningful family relations. In *All Our Kin*, an ethnography of

TABLE 13.1 ***Theory in Everyday Life***

Perspective	Approach to Family	Case Study: Marriage
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Family performs necessary functions, such as the socialization of children, that help society run smoothly and maintain social order.	Marriage regulates sexuality and forms the basis for family, with all its other functions.
CONFLICT THEORY	Family is a site of various forms of stratification and can produce and reproduce inequalities based on these statuses.	Marriage as a civil right is extended only to heterosexual couples in most states and nations. This is both a cause and a consequence of homophobia in society.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Family is a social construction; it is created, changed, and maintained in interaction.	Marriage is not made solely by completing a legal contract but is also constructed through the accretion of everyday interactions between partners over the years.

kinship relations in an urban African American community, Carol Stack found this dynamic at work in the way people talked about family—including this woman, who says,

> Most people kin to me are in this neighborhood . . . but I got people in the South, in Chicago, and in Ohio too. I couldn't tell most of their names and most of them aren't really kinfolk to me. . . . [T]ake my father, he's no father to me. I ain't got but one daddy and that's Jason. The one who raised me. My kids' daddies, that's something else, all their daddies' people really take to them—they always doing things and making a fuss about them. We help each other out and that's what kinfolks are all about. (Stack 1974)

A symbolic interactionist might say that "family members do not merely passively conform to others' expectations" but rather "actively and creatively construct and modify their roles through interactions" (Dupuis and Smale 2000)—that is, the people who help each other out, who care for each other, and who express that care are family, whether they are legally related or not.

Forming Relationships, Selecting Mates

You may think that you are attracted to certain people because of their unique individual characteristics or something intangible called "chemistry." In reality, however, Cupid's arrow is largely aimed by society. Two time-tested concepts in social science—*homogamy* and *propinquity*—tell us a lot about how the mate-selection process works. Homogamy literally means "like marries like": we tend to choose mates who are similar to us in class, race, ethnicity, age, religion, education, and even levels of attractiveness. You can certainly find examples of people whose romantic relationships cross these category lines—interracial or interreligious couples, or May/December romances—but these relationships are often viewed with disapproval by others in the couples' social circles. There are considerable social pressures to adhere to homogamy.

Propinquity refers to geographical proximity: we tend to choose people who live nearby. This is logical; we are likely to find possible mates among the people in our neighborhood, at work, or at school. The internet makes courtship and romance possible across much greater geographical areas, as we can now meet and converse with people in all parts of the world, so our pool of potential mates moves beyond local bounds. But even this technology may intensify homogamy by bringing together people with very specific interests and identities. Examples include internet services such as J-Date, for Jewish singles; Prime Singles, for people over 50; and EbonyConnect, for African American singles.

Courtship, romance, and intimacy are all influenced by the larger culture—and are also historically specific. While we experience courtship at an individual, interactional level, it will always be shaped by macro-structural forces in the larger society, such as racial, ethnic, or religious prejudices, and gendered role expectations. But courtship changes as other aspects of the surrounding culture change. As our society becomes less racist, sexist, and heterosexist, romantic options will expand as well. The development of intimate romantic relationships is not something "natural"; it is socially constructed to *appear* natural.

propinquity the tendency to marry or have relationships with people in close geographic proximity

Doing the Work of Family

When we think of work, we usually think of activities done for a paycheck. But paid labor is not the only type of work that sociologists are interested in—especially in the study of the family. Many types of work—both paid and unpaid—are necessary to keep a family operating: child care, housecleaning, car maintenance, cooking, bill-paying, vacation planning, and doing laundry—the list seems endless, especially when you are the one doing the work!

These tasks can be instrumental or expressive. **Instrumental tasks** generally achieve a tangible goal (washing the dishes, fixing the gutters), whereas **expressive tasks** generally achieve emotional or relational goals (remembering relatives' birthdays, playing Chutes and Ladders with the kids). In a real family, however, much of the work has both instrumental and expressive elements. The expressive work of remembering and celebrating birthdays, for example, includes all sorts of instrumental tasks such as buying presents, writing cards, and baking cakes (Di Leonardo 1987; Pleck 2000).

As a social scientist committed to making the invisible labor of family visible, Marjorie DeVault (1991) excavates all the knowledge, skills, and practices—both instrumental and expressive—we take for granted when, for example, we feed our families. Not only is the knowledge of cooking needed, but there must be appropriate shopping to keep a stocked kitchen; to make meals that account for family members' likes, dislikes, and allergies; and to create a varied and balanced menu. Producing meals that please, satisfy, and bring individuals together is just one of the ways that family is created and sustained through interactional work. We constitute family in and through meals and every other mundane activity of everyday life.



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Comparative Mealtime

Some of us carry a strong and positive image of our family gathered around the dining room table for dinner each evening. While we were growing up, dinner may have been the one time in the day when the whole family was together and shared food, stories, lessons, and news. For many of us, a great deal of socialization took place around the dinner table; we learned about manners ("sit up straight," "don't speak with your mouth full") as well as morality, politics, or anything else that seemed important to the adults raising us. Some of us, on the other hand, may have different memories of family mealtimes. Perhaps they were a time of tension and arguments, or perhaps the family rarely ate a meal together.

instrumental tasks the practical physical tasks necessary to maintain family life

expressive tasks the emotional work necessary to support family members

In this Data Workshop, you will be using participant observation as a research method (see Chapter 3 for a review) and doing ethnographic research on mealtime activity. You will compare two or more different mealtime settings and situations. You can choose from among a range of different possibilities, including the following:

- Which meal you study—breakfast, lunch, or dinner
- Where the meal takes place—in your family home; at a friend's or a relative's house; at your own apartment or dormitory dining hall; at a workplace lunch room, picnic in the park, or restaurant
- Who is eating—family members, roommates, friends, coworkers, or strangers

After you participate in and observe two mealtimes, write down answers to the following questions:

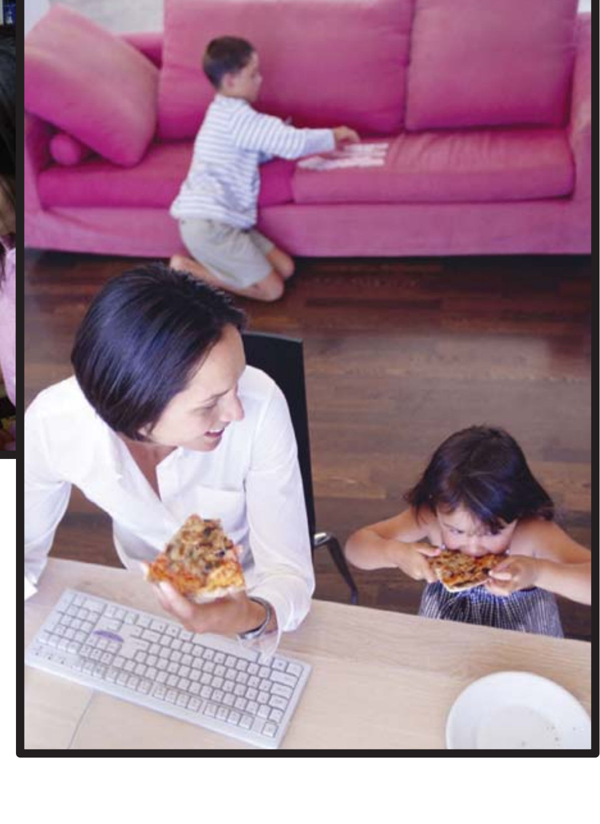
- What are the prevailing rules, rituals, norms, and values associated with the setting and situation? For example, does everyone sit down to eat at the same time? Do people leave after they finish even if others are still eating?
- What kinds of complementary roles are the various participants engaged in? Who cooks the food, sets the table, clears the table, does the dishes, and so forth?
- What other types of activities (besides eating) are taking place at mealtime? Are people watching TV, listening to music or a ball game, reading the newspaper?
- What social purposes does the setting or situation serve other than providing a mealtime environment for the participants? For example, what do the participants talk about? If children are involved, do they talk about school or their friends? Are family activities or problems discussed?

In addition to taking detailed notes, you may also wish to interview some of the participants.

There are two options for completing the assigned work in the Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Make the observations described above and conduct any formal or informal interviews





What's for Dinner? Compare these two family meals. What do our mealtime practices tell us about contemporary American families?

you wish. Prepare some written notes that you can refer to during in-class discussions. Compare and contrast the analyses of the different family meals observed by participants in your group. What are the similarities and differences in your observations?

- *Option 2 (formal)*: Make the observations described above, and conduct any formal or informal interviews you wish. Write a three- to four-page essay answering the questions listed above and reflecting on your own experience in conducting this study. What do you think your observations tell us about contemporary American families and the practices of family mealtimes? Don't forget to attach your fieldnotes and interview transcripts.

Gender and Family Labor

Imagine working a labor-intensive 40 to 60 hours waiting tables, making automobile parts, typing memos, or teaching second graders. You arrive home feeling tired, hungry, and worn out, but you cannot sit down to relax. You still need to cook a meal, do some laundry and cleaning, and take care of your children or perhaps your elderly parents.

Who is more likely to come home to this scenario? Among heterosexual couples, women are more likely to have the dual workload of paid labor outside the home and unpaid labor inside the home. In this section, we will discuss the division of labor within the household.

Men and women have always performed different roles to ensure the survival of their families, but these roles were not considered unequal until after the Industrial Revolution. At that time, men began to leave their homes to earn wages working in factories. Women remained at home taking care of children and carrying out other domestic responsibilities. As men's earned wages replaced subsistence farming—in which women had always participated—these wages became the primary mechanism for providing food, clothing, and shelter for families, thus giving men economic power over women. Feminist sociologists contend that women's "second shift" is the legacy of this historic economic change.

Despite women's increasing participation in the paid workforce, they are still more likely to perform the bulk of household and caregiving labor. In a few cases, men share household chores (Coltrane 1997) but women bear the brunt of unpaid household labor. Arlie Hochschild and Machung's 1989 study of working couples and parents found that women were indeed working two jobs: paid labor outside the home, or the first shift, and unpaid labor inside the home, or the **second shift**. Hochschild and Machung found that these women tried

second shift unpaid labor inside the home; often expected of women after they get home from working at paid labor outside the home



Permutations of Family Living: From Boomerang Kids to the Sandwich Generation

When people talk about the disappearance of the nuclear family, they usually are referring to the divorce rate, but, especially for the baby boom generation, families are changing in other ways as well. Traditionally, becoming middle-aged was associated with the "mid-life crisis" but also with maturity, wisdom, and increased professional skills. While this might seem like a contradiction, changes in the nature of the family make it seem more like a necessity! Increasing numbers of middle-aged people are becoming members of a "sandwich generation," adults who provide material and emotional support for both "young children and older living parents" (Lachman 2004, p. 322). This effect is magnified by the increasing number of so-called boomerang kids, who leave home at 18 to attend college but often return home for at least a short period of time afterward.

Both of these dynamics are being driven less by choice than by demographic and economic necessity. In 1970 the average age at first marriage was less than 21 for women and a little over 23 for men. Today the median age at first marriage for women is 25, and for men it's almost 27. As a result, people are having children later, increasing the chances that child rearing and elder care will overlap. Advances in life expectancy also contribute to the sandwich effect, even as many of the medical advances that allow people to live longer also increase their need for material support. While there have always been adults caring for their elderly parents, never before have there been this many elderly. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of the "oldest old," those 85 and older, increased 274 percent between 1960 and 1994 while "the elderly population in general rose 100 percent and the entire U.S. population grew only 45 percent" (U.S. Census Bureau 1995). Meanwhile, between tuition increases, student loans, and the high price of real estate, students are leaving college more likely to need help from their parents than ever before. In 1980 fewer than 9 percent of all individuals between 25 and 34 lived with their parents. By the year 2007 this number had increased to almost 12 percent, still a small group, but one that has increased 34 percent over the last three decades.

Members of the sandwich generation have found themselves with more responsibilities than ever before. Not only are their parents living longer than before, but medical costs associated with old age are growing rapidly, and often they have children, of all ages, still dependent on them as well. Never before has there been a substantial cohort of Americans so directly burdened with such a wide range of family responsibilities. However, in some ways the more the sandwich generation adults and the boomerang kids change the family, the more they stay the same, especially in the way that gender roles manifest themselves. Even among 18- to 24-year-olds, boys are more likely to live at home than girls, and 60 percent of the boomerang kids between 25 and 34 are male. While men and women might be driven by the same financial troubles, moving back in with her parents has different consequences for a woman. She is likely to be asked to take on more domestic responsibilities, and typically she

numerous strategies to achieve balance between work and home: hiring other women to clean their houses and care for their children; relying on friends or family members for help; refusing to do certain chores, especially those considered to be generally "men's work"; lowering their expectations for cleanliness or quality of child care; or reducing the number of hours they worked outside the home. But some women accept their dual workloads without any help to avoid conflicts with spouses and children. Hochschild and Machung called these women "Supermoms" but also found that these "Supermoms" often felt unhappy or emotionally numb.



Sandwich Generation Julie Winokur (far left) juggles taking care of her father, who is suffering from Parkinson's disease, and raising her daughter (on the far right). How typical is the Winokur family today?

feels a greater loss of independence. Gender functions in similar ways for the sandwich generation, as it is still mostly women who are called on to provide the emotional and instrumental support for elderly parents, even when those women also work. In fact, "working women who do take on caregiving tasks may reduce their work hours" (Velkoff and Lawson 1998, p. 2), finding themselves having to prioritize family over career in ways men often don't.

Despite the many costs associated with being a member of the sandwich generation, there is good news as well. Although there are challenges associated with "dual responsibilities," these are mostly experienced as "a 'squeeze' but not stress," and these relationships are also a source of happiness and well-being (Lachman 2004, p. 322). And while there is still a certain stigma associated with moving back in with your parents, the fact that so many are willing to do so suggests that today's boomerang kids may enjoy closer relationships with their parents than kids of previous generations did.

Although Hochschild and Machung's observations were groundbreaking in their analysis of post-feminist families, their concept of the "Supermom" has been applicable to working-class mothers all along. The stay-at-home parent is possible only when one salary can support the entire family. Before college-educated women were encouraged to work in the paid labor force, working-class women were there out of necessity. The strategies that middle-class women use to negotiate their second shift are available only to wealthier families. After all, a woman who cleans another family's house and takes care of their children rarely has the financial resources to hire someone to do the same for her.

On the Job

Juggling Work and Family

Since we now understand that being "on the job" can mean doing the work of family *or* the work of an employer, let's take a look at a typical day in the Brown family home in suburban Bellwood, Illinois. Deborah Brown is assistant chief of patient administration and financial services at the Veterans Administration West Side Medical Center in Chicago, and her husband, Alvin, is a data-solutions consultant for Ameritech. They have two sons: Jeffery, 9, and Jalen, 6.

5:00 A.M.: Deborah's alarm goes off. She showers and takes her daily supplements: a multivitamin for the body and 15 minutes of daily meditations for the soul.

5:30 A.M.: She packs a salad for lunch.

6:00 A.M.: Time to awaken Jeffery and nudge him toward the new week.

6:05 A.M.: She wakes up Alvin to help with the daily child-readiness project.

6:15 A.M.: Alvin awakens Jalen and helps get him dressed. "It's not easy," Alvin says. "He's a sleepyhead."

6:20 A.M.: As the rest of the family pulls together books and backpacks, Deborah makes all the beds and finishes getting dressed.

6:30 A.M.: Alvin heads out to the garage to get Deborah's car out and pull it around to the front of the house.

6:40 A.M.: Deborah and the kids head out. Alvin, who will be working from his home office, sees them off and heads back into the house to do a little cleaning.

6:55 A.M.: Arriving at the St. John's Lutheran School and Child Care in Forest Park, Deborah signs the boys in and they scamper off to the dining area. Jeffery chooses sausage and biscuits, while Jalen goes for his favorite: French toast sticks with syrup.

7:00 A.M.: Back in the car, Deborah heads to work.

7:10 A.M.: At home, Alvin tosses a load of laundry into the washer and prepares for a conference call with his sales team.

7:20 A.M.: Deborah arrives at the medical center.

7:30 A.M.: At her desk, she settles in with a bagel, milk, and her e-mail. Meanwhile, back home Alvin starts his conference call, and at school Jeffery is reading a Harry Potter book while Jalen plays during before-school care.

7:50 A.M.: Employees from the midnight shift start briefing Deborah, in preparation for a staff meeting.

8:15 A.M.: She meets with senior staff members, while at school the first bell rings and the boys head for class. At home, Alvin grabs a bagel and shower, irons his clothes and gets dressed for the day.

8:30 A.M.: At school, the students begin their daily devotional, then say the Pledge of Allegiance. Afterward, they fill in their prayer journal. Jalen later will explain that he prayed for his broken Power Rangers toy.

9:00 A.M.: Deborah begins her daily conference call with managers at remote sites, while at home, Alvin puts in another load of laundry and sits to read the newspaper. He has had the TV next to his office tuned to MSNBC since he first went downstairs. He cannot stop listening to coverage of the presidential election.

9:10 A.M.: Alvin's mother, Maryann Kirkpatrick of Calumet City, calls to say hello. "She's my best friend," Alvin says. "We talk two or three times a day."

9:20 A.M.: A coworker calls Alvin to work on quotes for a sales offer.

9:30 A.M.: Deborah starts returning calls and starts on paperwork that will carry her to lunch.

10:00 A.M.: Alvin looks through papers the boys brought home from school before the holidays.

10:40 A.M.: Still expecting a slow day of work, Alvin grabs a load of laundry from the dryer and starts folding and sorting. "I do the wash," he says. "Deborah puts it away." All the while MSNBC still can't tell him who his next president will be.

10:55 A.M.: Now the work phone won't leave Alvin alone. He has finished folding one load of laundry, but the dryer will spit out another load shortly. He is holed up in his office, in front of his computer. Though he can't watch it, the TV news remains audible.

11:15 A.M.: He leaves the office for a minute to sit in front of the TV. Still no president.

11:45 A.M.: Alvin is back in his office, going through e-mail.

12:00 P.M.: At school, the boys are having meatloaf, carrots and potatoes.

12:10 P.M.: Deborah calls Alvin to say hello, then finishes some correspondence to get to her lunch.

1:10 P.M.: Alvin grabs the last load of laundry from the dryer and starts folding, while at the hospital, Deborah is grinding out correspondence, and at school, the boys are back to their studies.

2:00 P.M.: The work phone has recaptured Alvin.

2:40 P.M.: Alvin runs upstairs to grab the mail, then heads back to his office, where he is reviewing faxes that have been trickling in all day.

3:00 P.M.: Deborah starts answering e-mails that have been mounting up. At school, class is over and the boys have gone to the after-school care program. At home, Alvin's work phone has been getting busier and busier. So much for the easy day.

4:30 P.M.: The taxi is back in business as Deborah leaves work and heads for the school.

4:40 P.M.: Alvin escapes his office and heads up to the kitchen to start getting dinner ready. He prepares potatoes for boiling and retrieves a slab of salmon from the refrigerator for broiling. He flips on the under-the-counter TV. Still no president.

5:00 P.M.: Back in his office, he is on a conference call with his boss. They have a problem and need to talk with some technicians. Upstairs, the potatoes are starting to boil.

5:05 P.M.: He runs upstairs to check the potatoes and put the fish in the broiler.

5:13 P.M.: Still waiting for someone to answer their call, Alvin races upstairs to check the food again. In a flash he's back to his phone.

5:20 P.M.: The Brown family has arrived. Alvin is still on the phone, trying to resolve the problem while Deborah rescues the salmon from the broiler and turns down the heat on the potatoes. Jeffery starts unloading his book bag, including his letter to Santa.

5:45 P.M.: Dinner is served with a prayer.

6:05 P.M.: Dinner over, Alvin and Deborah clear the table and start washing dishes.

6:45 P.M.: Jalen heads up to his room to start homework. Jeffery starts practicing on the electronic keyboard, preparing for a piano lesson the next day. Alvin returns to his office and work.

7:45 P.M.: Jalen is in the tub for a bath, and Jeffery is reading Harry Potter again but will hop into the tub once Jalen finishes.

8:00 P.M.: The boys get ready for prayers and sleep. Deborah tucks them in and gets good-night hugs.

8:15 P.M.: "Now it's time for Round 2," Deborah says. She starts gathering books and book bags and clothes for the morning routine.

8:30 P.M.: The boys are asleep, and Deborah irons the boys' clothes for tomorrow, then her own.

9:00 P.M.: Deborah packs her lunch for the next day and starts going through family mail.

9:30 P.M.: Alvin brings up a basket of the laundry he folded earlier for Deborah to put away. Then she starts getting ready for bed.

9:58 P.M.: Alvin pulls Deborah's car around and puts it in the garage, then runs to a gas station to fill his tank because he will be up early to go to work.

10:30 P.M.: Alvin is back, catches Jay Leno's monologue and starts watching the rest of the video he started the night before.

10:35 P.M.: Deborah finishes reviewing work. "It's been a long day," she says, "and it's only Monday!"

12:15 A.M.: Alvin decides to go to bed. He still hasn't been able to finish the video. And still no president. (Werland 2000)

The Browns experience the "spillover" of work and family in a number of areas: Deborah is "on the job" at home even when she's at the office, and Alvin is "on the job" from his home office even when he's folding laundry and cooking dinner. The boys' needs are attended to by both parents and are incorporated into their schedules beginning early in the morning and ending late in the evening. And the needs of extended family members (like Alvin's mother) are part of the Browns' routine, even if they don't live in the same household. This ordinary day is uncomplicated by any of the little glitches that families routinely experience—a sick child or a broken-down car—and it is still long, tiring, and complex. Spouses and parents are always "on the job" when it comes to family.



Supermom For many American women, "work" doesn't end when they leave the workplace. On returning home, many begin what Arlie Hochschild calls "the second shift," doing the unpaid work of running a household, including doing the laundry, feeding the children, and helping with homework.

Family and the Life Course

As an agent of socialization and the most basic of primary groups, the family molds everyone—young children, teenagers, adults, and senior citizens—and its influences continue throughout the life course.

When we are children, our families provide us with our first lessons in how to be members of society (see Chapter 5 on socialization). Children's experiences are shaped by family size, birth order, presence or absence of parents, socioeconomic status, and other sociological variables. Dalton Conley's 2004 work *Pecking Order* maintains that inequality between siblings and things outside the family's control such as the economy, war, illness, death, and marital discord create effects that impact each child at different stages in his or her life, resulting in different experiences for each child. Conley argues that family proves not to be the consistent influence many people view it to be.

In addition, the presence of children shapes the lives of parents. Marital satisfaction tends to decline when there are small children in the house, and couples' gendered division of labor becomes more traditional when children are born, even if it has been nontraditional up to that point. As children get older, they may exert other types of influence on their parents—for example, children can pressure their parents into quitting smoking or eating healthier food. And of course, later in life, they may be called on to care for their elderly parents as well as their own offspring—a phenomenon known as "the sandwich generation" effect.

Aging in the Family

The American population is aging—the number of Americans 65 or older is growing twice as fast as the population as a whole (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 2002). This is because of the baby boom generation (the large number of Americans born in the post–World War II era) moving into middle age and beyond, concurrent with advances in medical technology. Current average life expectancy in the United States is approximately 78 years (with women living an average of almost six years longer than men). More people are living longer, and that has an impact on families and society.

Planning for an aging population means taking into account both the basic and special needs of older individuals. Retirement income is an important part of this planning—Social Security benefits are the major source of income for about 80 percent of the elderly in the United States and the only source of income for 54 percent of America's retired population. Without other sources of income, retired citizens may find themselves with limited resources; currently, about 10 percent of the elderly live below the poverty line. Some seniors solve the problems by living with their adult children or with nonfamily members; even so, about 50 percent of women and about 20 percent of men over 65 live alone. Like other traditional functions of the family (like educating children), the care of the elderly is no longer a primary duty of family and has been taken over by other institutions: over 40 percent of senior citizens will spend time in a nursing home, being housed and cared for by people other than their family members (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 2002).

Coping with the transitions of retirement, widowhood, declining health, and death are central tasks for seniors. However, as the average life span extends, the elderly are also taking on new roles in society. Many live healthy, vibrant, active lives and are engaged with their families and communities



Marie Wilcox-Little, Age 73, Swimmer

Donald Goo, Age 73, Surfer

in ways that are productive for both the individual and the person's groups.

Trouble in Families

While families are often a place of comfort, support, and unconditional love, some are not a "haven in a heartless world" (Lasch 1977). The family may be where we are at the greatest risk—emotionally, socially, and physically. "People are more likely to be killed, physically assaulted, sexually victimized . . . in their own homes by other family members than anywhere else, or by anyone else, in our society" (Gelles 1995, p. 450).

Because family is the site of unequal power relations and intense feelings, and because of current social norms about the privacy of family life, the circumstances for trouble and violence are ripe. The concept of private nuclear families did not occur in the United States until the early 1900s. In colonial times, child raising was a community activity in which community leaders and neighbors often overruled parental decisions about children. In the late 1800s, mothers looked to other mothers for advice about their children (Coontz 2000). Mothers' journals at the time show that the opinions of other women were often more important than the husband's in family decisions. Not until the 1900s did the isolated nuclear family become the ideal in the minds of Americans.

Domestic Violence and Abuse

Imagine that tomorrow's newspapers ran front-page headlines about a newly discovered disease epidemic that could potentially kill one-third of all American women. Between 1 million and 4 million women would be afflicted in the next year alone. What kind of public reaction would there be?

Let's reframe the scenario: in the United States, one out of every three women suffers physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner at some point in her adult life (National Domestic Violence Hotline 2003). In addition, millions of women suffer verbal, financial, and psychological abuse from those who are supposed to love them. Despite these statistics, such abuse is a silent epidemic, seldom reported.

Domestic violence is an umbrella term for the behaviors abusers use to gain and maintain control over their victims. These behaviors fall into five main categories: physical (slapping, punching, kicking, choking, shoving, restraining), verbal (insults, taunts, threats, degrading statements), financial (insisting on complete control of all household finances, including making decisions about who will work and when), sexual (rape, molestation), and psychological or emotional abuse (mind games, threats, stalking, intimidation). Although not all abusers are physically violent toward their partners, any one type of abuse increases the likelihood of the others. In an abusive relationship, it is extremely rare to find only one form of abuse.

Rates of domestic violence are about equal across racial and ethnic groups, sexual orientations, and religions (Bachman and Saltzman 1995). Women are certainly not the only demographic group to suffer from domestic abuse, but statistically, they are five to eight times

domestic violence any physical, verbal, financial, sexual, or psychological behaviors abusers use to gain and maintain power over their victims

more likely than men to be victimized by an intimate partner (Greenfeld et al. 1998; National Domestic Violence Hotline 2003). According to the U.S. Department of Justice, women between the ages of 16 and 24 are victims of abuse at the hands of an intimate partner more frequently than women in any other age group (Rennison 2001). Poor women are also more likely to be abused than women with higher incomes (Bachman and Saltzman 1995). Age and economic security, however, do not make someone immune to abuse.

Contrary to popular opinion, most abusive partners are not "out of control," nor do they have "anger management problems" in the traditional sense. They often seem charming and calm to coworkers, friends, and police officers; they deliberately decide to be violent with those least likely to report the crime and over whom they maintain the most control: their family members. Domestic violence results from the abuser's desire for power over the victim, and abusers often blame their victims: I wouldn't have beaten you if dinner had been on time, or if you hadn't been "flirting" with the sales associate at the mall. One abuser is reported to have said to police officers, "Yes, I hit her five or six times but it was only to calm her down" ("Even in the Best of Homes" 2003).

A four-stage **cycle of violence** seems to occur in almost every abusive relationship. In the first stage, the abusive partner is charming, attentive, and thoughtful; disagreements are glossed over and the relationship looks stable and healthy. However, tension is building to the second stage, often described as "walking on eggshells." Here, both parties sense that something will happen no matter what the victim may do to try to avoid it. During the third stage, acute battering and violence occur, lasting for seconds, hours, or even days. Whatever happens, the abuser will invariably blame the victim for the incident. The fourth stage, often referred to as "loving contrition," is the "honeymoon" phase and is one of the reasons victims remain in violent relationships. After the violence, the abuser will apologize profusely and promise that it will never happen again. The abuser may buy the victim gifts, beg forgiveness, and talk about getting help or making a change. Most abusers, however, have no interest in changing because they don't want to give up their control over their victims. Soon the cycle starts again, with flowers and gifts giving way to tension, uneasiness, and another battering.

cycle of violence a common behavior pattern in abusive relationships; the cycle begins happily, then the relationship grows tense, and the tension explodes in abuse, followed by a period of contrition that allows the cycle to repeat

neglect a form of child abuse in which the caregiver fails to provide adequate nutrition, sufficient clothing or shelter, or hygienic and safe living conditions

incest proscribed sexual contact between family members; a form of child abuse when it occurs between a child and a caregiver

Victims of domestic violence stay with their abusers for many reasons. After years of abuse, victims often believe what their abusers tell them: that they can't make it on their own and are somehow responsible for the abuse. If they have not been allowed to attend school or to work, they may not have employment skills. Often children are involved, or abusers threaten to harm other family members. Many victims have been isolated from friends and family and are afraid to speak of the abuse to anyone, and they see no options but to remain where they are.

Child and Elder Abuse

Adult partners are not the only victims of domestic violence. Children and the elderly also suffer at the hands of abusive family members—and can suffer in distinctive ways that are linked to their special status in the family. Child abuse and elder abuse are likely to be underreported, partly because of the relative powerlessness of their victims and the private settings of the abuse. The best official estimates are that about 47 of every 1,000 children in the United States are abused in some way (Weise and Daro 1995) and that about 5 percent of all seniors in this country have been subject to elder abuse in some form (Wolf 2000).

In addition to physical violence and verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse, children may experience a distinctive type of abuse known as **neglect**—inadequate nutrition, insufficient clothing or shelter, and unhygienic or unsafe living conditions. Because children depend on adults for their care and well-being, they suffer when those adults abandon or pervert that responsibility. **Incest** is another form of child abuse that exploits the trust that children must place in their caregivers. Inappropriate sexual relationships between parents and children have devastating lifelong consequences for child victims, which may include self-destructive behavior (including eating disorders and substance abuse) and the inability to form trusting relationships later in life. In addition, those who were physically or sexually abused as children have a much higher likelihood of becoming abusers themselves.

Elder abuse can also take distinctive forms. As well as physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse, there is financial exploitation or theft—relatives or other caregivers may steal or misuse the elder's property or financial resources. Another form is neglect and abandonment. Some elders are dependent on others to care for them. Refusal to provide food, shelter, health care, or protection can be as devastating to an elder as it is to a child. Both elder and child abuse

exploit the special powerlessness of victims and are difficult to monitor and control.



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Family Troubles in Film

Family relations have long been the basis of good comedic, tragic, and dramatic films. This Data Workshop asks you to use existing sources as a research method (see Chapter 3 for a review) and to do a content analysis of a film concerning family dynamics. Choose a film to watch and then analyze its relevance to some of the family issues discussed in this chapter. Although many films feature families, this assignment asks you to focus on one or more family problems.

The following films depict a variety of family troubles such as marital problems, divorce, domestic abuse, parental neglect, disabilities and illnesses, sex and dating, pregnancy, death, delinquency, and financial difficulties. Other movies could certainly be added to this list, as long as your instructor approves the film you would like to choose. Whatever movie you choose must be available on video or DVD so that you can view it carefully. Please be aware of the MPAA ratings for these or other movies, and watch only those titles that are appropriate for your age group and that you would feel comfortable viewing.

Affliction
American Beauty
Baby Boy
How to Deal
The Ice Storm
In America
In the Bedroom
The Joy Luck Club
Kramer vs. Kramer
Mi Familia (My Family)
Mrs. Doubtfire
My Big Fat Greek Wedding
Ordinary People
Pieces of April
Rachel Getting Married
The Royal Tennenbaums
Saving Face
Spanglish
Stepmom
Terms of Endearment
Thirteen
We Don't Live Here Anymore
What's Eating Gilbert Grape?
You Can Count on Me

Select a movie that is primarily about contemporary family relations and problems. Once you have chosen a movie, read through the rest of the workshop points and guidelines. Then watch the film closely and pay attention to the plotlines,



Family Troubles? What do films like *Saving Face* and *Mi Familia* tell us about contemporary American families?

scenes, characters, and dialogues in which family troubles are depicted. Take notes as you watch the movie; you may have to review it several times before you can do a thorough content analysis. This assignment has several parts, and you may also wish to add your own questions or comments.

Consider the following points and answer these questions:

- Give some background information on the film and why you chose it.
- Using sociological terms, describe the family troubles that are the focus of the film. How are these problems manifested in the lives of the family members? How do the various characters deal with their problems? What solutions do they propose through their actions? How effective are these solutions in addressing the family's troubles?
- Put the family's problems in a broader sociological perspective. Do you believe the family's troubles are more psychological or sociological in nature? In what ways are the individual troubles of family members linked to larger social patterns and problems? Compare the problems in the movie with their counterparts in the real world. Gather recent data relating to the family problems featured in the film, using sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, other government or private agencies, or various news sources. How widespread are these problems? How are they being discussed and dealt with at a public level? How accurately do you think the family's troubles, and their possible solutions, were depicted in the film? What kind of a role, if any, do you think the media can play in helping to reduce family troubles or associated social problems?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Make the observations described above and answer the preceding questions. Then prepare some written notes that you can refer to during in-class discussions. Compare and contrast the analyses of the films observed by participants in your discussion group.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Make the observations described above and answer the preceding questions. Then write a three- to four-page essay talking about your answers and reflecting on your observations of the film. What do you think your observations tell us about contemporary American families and the ways in which family troubles are portrayed on film?

cohabitation living together as a romantically involved, unmarried couple

Divorce and Breakups

Although many people stay in bad relationships, many couples also break up every day. In this section, we consider the changing patterns of divorce and remarriage as they affect children and adults. We also look at the resulting social problems of custody, visitation, and child support.

Changing Patterns

As of March 2002, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that more than 123 million persons were married while about 21 million were divorced. Thus, in 2002 about 55 percent of the entire U.S. population were married while just fewer than 10 percent were divorced. Figure 13.1 shows that the numbers of those who have married and the rates of divorce have increased over time. The percentage of married people who have divorced has increased more than five and a half times since 1950, indicating that about 50 percent of all first marriages now end in divorce (Kreider and Fields 2001).

Most who divorce remarry. Among parents of young children, the remarriage rate is very high. According to Cherlin and Furstenberg (1994), 75 percent of divorced men and 67 percent of divorced women ultimately remarry, and between 75 percent and 80 percent of divorced parents remarry (Weissbourd 1994). But remarriage rates in the United States are actually lower now than they were before the 1960s, a fact attributable to the increase in **cohabitation**, or living together, among unmarried couples. Census data reveal that about 5 percent of all households are occupied by unmarried heterosexual couples, which may reflect a certain caution about marriage as a result of rising rates of divorce.

In the early 1970s, the children of divorced parents were more than three times more likely to divorce than their peers from intact families. But by the mid-1990s, this figure had dropped to about one and a half times (Wolfinger 1999, 2000). According to Wolfinger (2003), the decline of intergenerational divorce and marriage rates probably has three sources. One is the growing acceptance of divorce. Children of divorced parents no longer suffer the social stigma that was

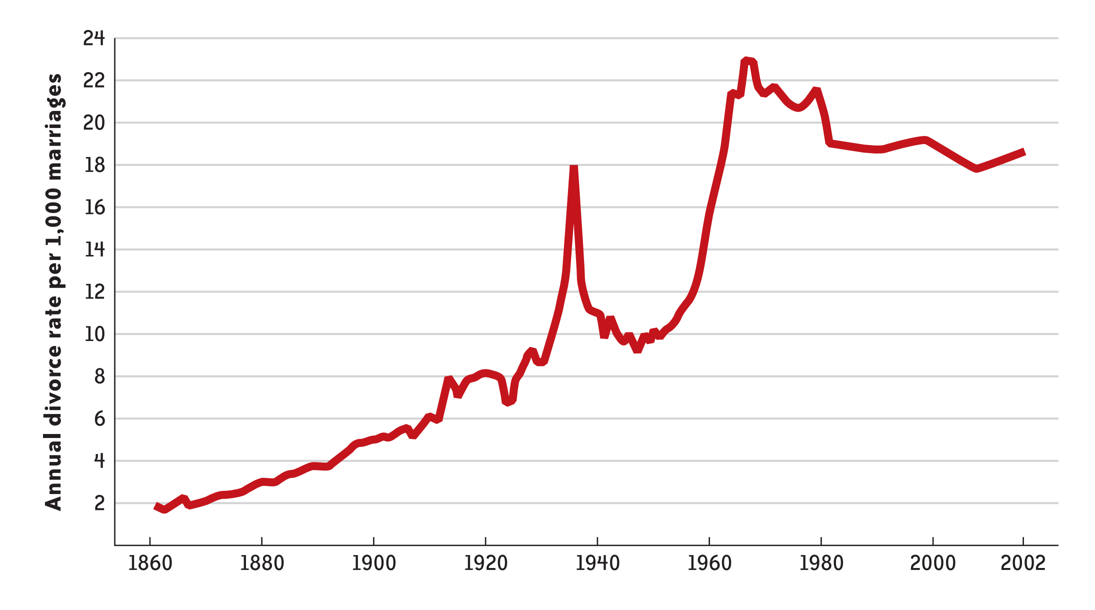


FIGURE 13.1 **U.S. Divorce Rate Over the Past Century**

SOURCE: Cherlin 2005

once the byproduct of divorce and are less likely to develop psychological problems as a result—which may have contributed to their divorces in the past. Second, the age of marriage has changed. Children of divorce are still more likely to marry as teenagers, but those not married by age 20 are more likely not to marry at all than their peers from intact families. Third, children of divorced parents are more likely to cohabit with their partners and are less likely to marry them than children of nondivorced parents. Therefore, the decline in marriage rates among children of divorced parents can be explained by both increased rates of cohabitation and an increased propensity not to marry at all.

Custody, Visitation, and Child Support

Reviewing the legal policies that address the consequences of divorce for children, sociologists are concerned with whether custody, visitation, and child support effectively replace the resources, both emotional and financial, of an intact household. Do they help children?

Custody is the physical and legal responsibility for the everyday life and routines of children. While mothers still disproportionately receive custody, there is a trend toward joint custody (Cancian and Meyer 1998). Parents who are well educated, have high socioeconomic status, live in cities, and are nonwhite are more likely than others to have joint custody of their children (Donnelly and Finkelhor 1993). A father is more likely to be awarded sole custody when his income is substantially more than the mother's (Cancian and Meyer 1998), when his children are older, or when the oldest child is male (Fox and Kelly 1995). A mother is more likely to receive sole custody when she has a high level of education, her children are younger, and the father is unemployed (Fox and Kelly 1995).

Courts award visitation to noncustodial parents to protect parent-child relationships. Generally, parents with regular visitation patterns are better able to meet the psychological and financial needs of their children. Fathers who visit regularly are more likely to maintain strong relationships with their children and to pay child support (Seltzer, Schaeffer, and Charng 1989). Despite increased vigilance of courts and lawmakers regarding mandated child support policies, noncustodial parents often fail to make regular payments to the custodial parent. Sociologists have found that many parents make informal arrangements, or decisions without the mediation of the legal system, about child support schedules soon after the divorce (Peters et al. 1993) and the stability of payments varies substantially, even among the most reliable payers (Meyer and Bartfeld 1998).

As children are more likely to live in poverty after their parents' divorce, child support policies are important. Women are more likely to suffer downward economic mobility after divorce, especially if they retain custody of their children. Furstenberg, Hoffman, and Shrestha (1995) found that women experience on average a 25 percent decline in their economic well-being after a divorce. Accompanying this post-divorce decline in financial resources are often scholastic failure, disruptive conduct, and troubled relationships in children of divorced families (Keith and Finlay 1988;

custody the physical and legal responsibility of caring for children; assigned by a court for divorced or unmarried parents

Morrison and Cherlin 1995). Further, divorce seems to negatively affect male children more than female children as boys are more likely to act out than girls.

Stepparents and Blended Families

Most divorced people remarry, which means that one in three Americans is a member of a stepfamily (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 2002). However, statistics about stepfamilies are inconsistent and often contradictory because quantifying and defining the intricate relationships involved in a stepfamily are difficult. The 2000 U.S. Census did not account for them in its data gathering. There are historically no traditional norms or models for stepfamilies, and our firmly held notions of the "traditional" family lead many in stepfamilies to find the transition to a new family situation difficult. Stepfamilies face special challenges, for example, when there are children in different stages of the lifecycle. The needs and concerns of teenagers may be vastly different from those of their infant half-sibling, and it may take more work to adjust to the new living situation. With the added challenges of blending in-laws, finances, and households, remarriages are even more likely to end in divorce than first marriages. However, in successful remarriages, partners are usually older and have learned important lessons about compatibility and relationship maintenance from the failure of their first marriages.



The Brady Bunch America's best-known blended family.

Trends in American Families

"There's this pervasive idea in America that puts marriage and family at the center of everyone's lives," says Bella M. DePaulo, visiting professor of psychology at the University of California at Santa Barbara, "when in fact it's becoming less and less so" (personal communication 2003). Many people live outside such arrangements. In fact, the average American now spends the majority of his or her life unmarried because people live longer, delay marriage, or choose an alternative "single" lifestyle (Kreider and Fields 2002).

Being Single

The term *single* often implies a young adult who is actively seeking a partner for a relationship or marriage. But singles also include gays and lesbians, people living alone who are in long-distance relationships, people living in communes, widows and widowers, minors in group homes, and some clergy members as well as those who are single due to divorce or deliberate choice.

Married couples were the dominant model through the 1950s, but their numbers have slipped from nearly 80 percent of households to just above 50 percent now. Married couples with children—the traditional model of family—total just 25 percent of households, and that number is projected to drop (National Opinion Research Center 1999). The remaining households are single parents, cohabiting partners, or others. A stunning 30 percent of all households are made up of people who live alone, and in 2005 unmarrieds became the new majority (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b).

Among the growing movement of activists promoting the rights of unmarried people in the United States is the nonprofit Alternatives to Marriage Project and its associated advocacy group Unmarried America (Solot and Miller 2002). They engage in research, education, and advocacy for unmarried and single adults of all types and are concerned about discrimination that is built into the American social system, especially at an economic and political level, but also in terms of culture and values. One of their efforts is to increase recognition of unmarrieds and singles as a constituency of voters, workers, taxpayers, and consumers worthy of equal rights and protection (Warner, Ihara, and Hertz 2001).

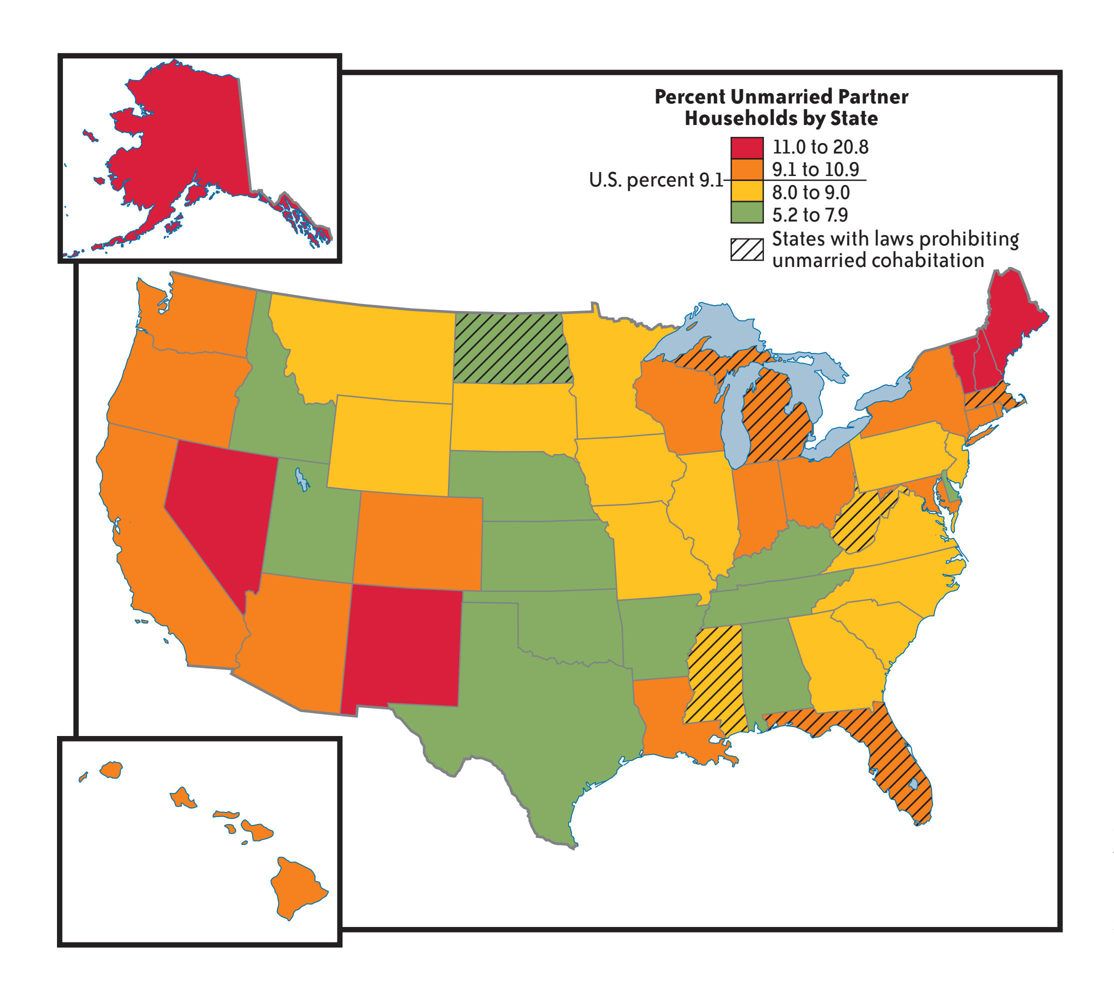


FIGURE 13.2 Cohabitation in the United States People are more likely to cohabit in coastal and western states, and less likely to do so in central and southern states.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau 2002a

Cohabitation

Between 1960 and 2000, the number of unmarried cohabiting couples in the United States increased 1,000 percent. More than 11 million people are living with an unmarried partner, including both same-sex and different-sex couples (see Figure 13.2). In addition, marriage is no longer the prerequisite for childbearing. More than one in three unmarried-couple households have children (U.S. Census Bureau 2000a), and one-third of all first births are to unmarried parents (National Center for Health Statistics 2001). Most couples that choose to cohabit rather than marry are 25 to 34 years of age. A possible reason may be the growing economic independence of individuals today, resulting in less financial motivation for a marriage contract. Also, changing attitudes about religion have made sexual relationships outside marriage more socially acceptable.

Single Parenting

Although some people become single parents through divorce or death, others choose to have children without the support of a committed partner—through adoption, artificial insemination, or surrogacy. In the United States, only 10 percent of single parents are single fathers. Attitudes about single mothers vary greatly and are often dependent on the mother's age, education level, occupation, and income and the family's support network from friends and extended family members.

A prevailing middle-class assumption about poor single mothers is that young women in the inner city become mothers to access welfare benefits. Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas (2005) spent five years doing in-depth research with 162 low-income single mothers to understand their attitudes about parenthood and marriage. They dispelled the myth that these women become mothers to cash in on welfare benefits and instead found that for these young women, having a baby is a symbol of belonging and being valued. Being a good mother is an accessible role that can generate respect and admiration in the community.

Regardless of the circumstances of single parenting, raising children without the help of a partner is challenging and difficult. Financially, physically, and emotionally, single parents must perform a task that was traditionally shared by a community rather than an individual.



Intentional Communities Members and former members of the Twin Oaks commune in Yanceyville, Virginia, celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the community.

Intentional Communities

As an increasing number of people choose to remain or become single, cohabit with others, or choose something else altogether, they are creating alternative models to organize their lives. Some join an **intentional community**, an inclusive term for a variety of different groups who form communal living arrangements that include ecovillages, cohousing, residential land trusts, communes, monasteries and ashrams, farming collectives, student co-ops, or urban housing coopera tives.

Members of an intentional community have chosen to live together with a common purpose, working cooperatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values. They may live on rural land, in a suburban home, or in an urban neighborhood, and they may share a single residence or live in a cluster of dwellings. Although quite diverse in philosophy and lifestyle, each of these groups places a high priority on fostering a sense of community—a feeling of belonging and mutual support that is increasingly hard to find in mainstream Western society (Kozeny 1995).

The Postmodern Family

intentional community any of a variety of groups who form communal living arrangements outside marriage

Families adapting to the challenges of a postmodern society may create family structures that look very different from the "traditional" family. Sociologist Judith Stacey explored some of these adaptations for her book *Brave New Families* (1990). The families and households she studied expanded and contracted over time and included members who were never part of the traditional *Leave It to Beaver* model of the nuclear family. Ex-spouses and their new partners and children, adult children and other kin, and even nonkin—friends and coworkers—populated the working-class Silicon Valley households she studied. Multiple earners and a diversity of generations, genders, and relational connections were the rule rather than the exception in her study:

> No longer is there a single culturally dominant family pattern, like the modern one, to which a majority of Americans conform and most of the rest aspire. Instead, Americans today have crafted a multiplicity of family and household arrangements that we inhabit uneasily and reconstitute frequently in response to changing personal and occupational circumstances. (Stacey 1990, p. 19)

We have entered an era of improvisation or do-it-yourself family forms; household members respond to social-structural changes in ways that fit their family's needs. These improvisational forms are not new; they are merely new to mainstream working- and middle-class families. Minorities, the poor, and gays and lesbians have always had to improvise to fit into a society that ignored or devalued their needs and activities (Stack 1974; Weston 1991; Edin

and Lein 1997; Stacey 1998). These improvisational, postmodern family forms will become more and more familiar to the rest of society as we all cope with the social and cultural changes of the twenty-first century.

Closing Comments

When sociologists study the dynamics of family, they must define the subject of their interest. What exactly is family? This process sometimes leads to definitions that lie outside the traditional notions of biological or legal relations that have historically defined family. Certainly this is true if one looks outside the United States at the astonishing variety of customs and practices that define family around the world. In the early twenty-first century, the nature of the nuclear family is changing, as divorced and blended families are altering the structure and function of all families, with a tendency to decrease the amount of contact and assistance between generations. The emergence of these "brave new families" has led to a sea change in the study of families, with an increasing recognition of the diversity and plurality that characterize family arrangements.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **What Is the Family?** Although the most common definition of the family involves a nuclear family living in one household, sociologists prefer a much broader definition. This chapter defines the family as any social group bound together by some type of tie—legal, biological, or emotional. This more open-ended definition takes into account the diversity among today's families, including the wide variety of ways that family units can be constituted outside marriage. The nuclear family as we know it only recently replaced an older extended family paradigm, and new models of family life are on the way. Although many kinds of bonds can constitute families, individual families tend to be made up of very similar people, as marriage in our society is highly endogamous.
- **Sociological Perspectives on the Family** Functionalist theory views the family as one of the basic institutions that keeps society running smoothly, producing and socializing children as well as providing an essential support system for the modern economy. Conflict theorists focus on the inequalities within and between families. Symbolic interactionists examine the types of social dynamics and interactions that create and sustain families, emphasizing the ways that our experiences of family bonds are socially created rather than naturally existing.
- **Family Work** Maintaining a household and a family involves a great deal of work, and recent research has focused on the ways this work is gendered. Women who don't work outside the home may have their labor devalued, while women who work for pay often find themselves taking on a second shift of housework.
- **Trouble in Families** Perhaps because the family is so important, the potential for family violence and abuse is high. Partly because of the intense emotions and power disparities between family members and the desire to keep family matters private, people are more likely to be killed or attacked by family members than by anyone else. Domestic violence between partners is by far the most common form of family violence; it is often perpetuated by the "cycle of violence" that causes victims to remain in abusive relationships. Child and elder abuse are also serious issues, particularly since children and elders are less capable of leaving an abusive relationship.
- **Divorce and Break-ups** The nature of the family is changing as rising rates of divorce and remarriage create more single-parent and blended families. Divorced parents must establish custody and visitation rights, often doing so in a court. At the same time, an increasing number of people are remaining single, raising children alone, cohabiting, or forming intentional communities beyond the parameters of marriage. These new family structures respond to the challenges of a postmodern society by including ex-spouses, new partners and children, adult children, other kin, and even nonkin such as friends and coworkers.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. How does this chapter's definition of family differ from the one used by the U.S. Census Bureau? Make a list of everyone you consider a family member. Is there anyone on this list who wouldn't qualify according to the Census Bureau's definition?
2. What do sociologists mean when they argue that instead of the sociology of *the family* we should have a sociology of *families*? Why do we think of particular people as family members?
3. Same-sex marriage is prohibited in most of the United States. At different points in American history couples of mixed race, ethnic background, or nationality were not legally allowed to marry. What do these three groups have in common with same-sex couples? What are the advantages of a legally recognized marriage?
4. Conflict theorists believe that strife within the family is fueled by competition for resources. What is the basis for inequality within the family? In families, who tends to receive fewer resources?
5. Homogamy helps explain a lot about mate selection in contemporary society: We tend to date and marry people who are similar to us in culturally meaningful ways. What cultural factors influence your relationship choices?
6. Another important factor that helps explain mate selection is propinquity, the tendency to choose mates who live in close geographic proximity to us. Some sociologists believe that technological changes are making propinquity less important. What sorts of changes make geographic location less relevant to mate selection?
7. Throughout history there has almost always been a division of labor by gender, but before the Industrial Revolution men's and women's labor were more equally valued. What changes led to the devaluation of tasks traditionally done by women?
8. Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung found that women who work outside the home often face a "second shift" of housework when they get home. How do men avoid doing their share of this work? Have you ever noticed someone—perhaps even yourself—adopting these tactics?
9. A popular stereotype holds that poor women have more children in order to gain welfare benefits, though researchers who have studied the issue tend to reject this idea. Why else might poor single mothers have children?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Coontz, Stephanie. 2005. *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage*. New York: Penguin Books. An analysis of the "traditional" marriage associated with the nuclear family. Coontz argues that this relatively new type of marriage is in crisis today.

Hua, Cai. 2001. *A Society Without Fathers or Husbands: The Na of China*. Cambridge, MA: Zone Books. A startling counterpoint to our some of our assumptions about the family, this ethnography describes the Na people of southern China who live without marriage. In Na culture, children are raised by their mother's family, without the participation of their biological father.

Krakauer, Jon. 2003. *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*. London: Pan Books. A compelling look at Mormon fundamentalist groups in the United States who espouse and practice polygyny. Although his book is primarily an account of a murder, Krakauer provides a wealth of background on both the history of the Mormon Church and the splinter groups who maintain some of the early church's most controversial beliefs and practices.

Number Our Days. 1976. Dir. Lynne Littman. Community Television of Southern California. This short documentary film based on the ethnographic study of elderly Jews in Venice, California, won an Oscar for its moving depiction of aging and the life course.

The OYEZ Project's site about *Loving vs. Virginia* (www.oyez.org/cases/1960-1969/1966/1966_395). A comprehensive account of the landmark case that effectively ended race-based marriage restrictions in the United States. The site includes sound files of the oral arguments and full text of the unanimous opinion written by Chief Justice Earl Warren striking down Virginia's antimiscegenation laws.

Rufus, Anneli. 2002. *Party of One: The Loners' Manifesto*. Washington, DC: Marlowe and Company. A polemic defense of the introvert and the loner, as well as a popular history of the prejudice against being alone. Rufus argues that people should be able to be single without feeling imperfect.

Three of Hearts. 2004. Dir. Susan Kaplan. Hibiscus Films. A documentary about two men in a romantic relationship who add a female partner to their home and develop a polyamorous relationship that redefines the limits of family.

Weston, Kath. 1997. *Families We Choose*. New York: Columbia University Press. A discussion of the way that members of the gay and lesbian community have reinterpreted the idea of family as a more inclusive, less kin-based institution, especially as many of them were rejected by and cut off from their birth families.



CHAPTER 14

Recreation and Leisure in Everyday Life

You're sitting in a darkened theater watching a movie unfold on the big screen. Two young lovers meet, woo, and marry. They honeymoon at a mountain resort—where, unfortunately, they are kidnapped by political rebels who break into song, swinging their rifles in unison as they dance in camouflage fatigues. After the ransom is paid, the couple return to the city, where they shop for housewares—at a store where clerks croon and shoppers dance in the aisles. But before they are allowed to live happily ever after, their baby is switched at birth with another infant, and they must track down their child with the help of a singing police detective/spiritual adviser. The film lasts over three hours; during that time, audience members (men in one section, women and children in another) come and go, fetching delicious snacks that extend far beyond prosaic popcorn and soda. They yell, groan, sing, talk back, and even throw things at the screen—but nobody shushes them. Where are you? You're in "Bollywood."

Unless you are South Asian, have traveled to India, or are a *very* dedicated film buff, you've probably never seen a Bollywood film. This term, an obvious take-off on the American film capital, is used to describe a particular class of movies produced in Mumbai or Bombay. The Indian film industry is the most prolific in the world, and the movies it produces are very different from those Americans are used to. A typical film usually includes romance, political intrigue, and dramatic events such as kidnappings, military battles, or natural disasters—and there is always lots of singing and dancing! In other words, Indian films are a mixture of what American audiences understand to be separate genres: romance, musical, action, thriller, and so on. As a result, Americans react to Indian films as strange, exhausting, and disorganized, while Indians find American movies boring, unemotional, and too short (Srinivas 1998).

In Indian theaters, silence is not the norm; audience members respond to what's on-screen in ways that seem startling or even wrong to Americans. The only American film experience that resembles the Bollywood model is the midnight showings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, where enthusiastic fans dress up, sing along, talk back, throw toast, and shoot squirt guns at the screen. In Bollywood, though, this type of behavior is the rule.

SocIndex

Then and Now

1371: The 52-playing-card deck is introduced in Europe

1998: Online card-playing is introduced on the internet

Here and There

United States: An estimated 2–3% of the population, or between 6 and 9 million adults, are addicted to gambling in 2006

Hong Kong: An estimated 5% of the population, or more than 350,000 adults, are addicted to gambling in 2008

This and That

In 2005, 57% of young men ages 14 to 22 report gambling on cards on a monthly basis.

Jeff Madsen, a 21-year-old University of California undergraduate, becomes the youngest player ever to take top prize when he wins the 2006 World Series of Poker.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

As we already know, different cultures may hold very different norms and values when it comes to work, family, education, and politics. This is just as true of the things we do for fun. In this chapter, we will examine the different types of activities that fall under the heading of recreation and leisure and consider how culture shapes and is shaped by these activities. Recreation and leisure activities actually form the basis for numerous subcultures, and we will examine some of those as well. Experiences with the mass media, sports, tourism, and nature and the wilderness are all subject to analysis from various theoretical perspectives, and all can be productively examined through the lenses of race, gender, and class. In short, we will apply our sociological tools to the things we do for fun.

Studying Leisure and Recreation

The terms *recreation* and *leisure* are both defined primarily by their difference from paid labor or other obligatory activities. **Leisure** is time that can be spent doing whatever you want, or just relaxing. **Recreation** is any activity that is satisfying or amusing, experienced as refreshing for body and mind. This means that just about any activity could fall under this heading, depending on individual preference, and that people can spend their leisure time engaged in all sorts of recreational activities (or not). The sociology of recreation and leisure is broad enough, then, to encompass all sorts of pastimes: playing volleyball, traveling to Italy, gardening, woodworking, needlepoint, listening to music, watching television, reading, shopping, writing poetry, hiking, baking cookies—the possibilities are endless. It's important to note that what makes something a recreational activity is not its appearance on this or any other list, but rather the experience of the activity itself. Does it feel enjoyable, liberating, even transformative? Then it's recreational. So what might be one person's job could be another person's recreational activity. If you bake cookies all day at work, for example, it's unlikely that you'll feel like doing so in your free time; those who do feel this way about their paid labor are extremely lucky!

leisure a period of time that can be spent relaxing, engaging in recreation, or otherwise indulging in freely chosen activities

recreation any satisfying, amusing, and stimulating activity that is experienced as refreshing and renewing for body, mind, and spirit

Recreation and leisure have changed dramatically in recent history. In the premodern world, the line between work and play was not nearly as clearly defined as it is today—in part because there was an awful lot of work to be done and there were fewer recreational options. Activities we now engage in almost exclusively as recreation (like gardening, hunting and fishing, or knitting) were necessities in the past, and common pastimes like going to the movies and watching television didn't even exist. Even in the late nineteenth century, low wages and long hours meant that only the wealthy had the time and resources to pursue recreational activities with any consistency. This situation began to change between 1890 and 1940, as the amount of time that the middle class could devote to leisure activities grew rapidly (Fischer 1994). The increase in leisure time was largely fueled by technological progress that increased industrial productivity and inventions such as the washing machine, dishwasher, and air-conditioning. Technological changes also fundamentally altered the nature of leisure activities.

Three Developments

Most discussions of modern leisure-time activities emphasize three related developments that have changed the ways in which we engage in them. We now look at each of these developments in turn.

THE DECLINE OF PUBLIC LIFE Sociologist Richard Sennett argues that modernity has seen the "fall of public man," as people more and more seek refuge in "ties of family or intimate association" (Sennett 1977, p. 3). This decline in public life has affected leisure in far-reaching ways. After World War II, the mass migration to the suburbs and the development of television encouraged people to stay home and even displaced public activities such as moviegoing (Fischer 1994). Television may have begun this process, but more recent developments have only intensified it. Video games, DVD players, personal computers, and the internet have all made the private home an even more attractive site for leisure. The internet in particular has begun to isolate individuals even within the home. While it can facilitate contact between people who live in different corners of the world, the internet can just as easily cut off individuals from family, friends, and spouses (Jackson 1999).

One large-scale longitudinal study sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts found that "Americans are increasingly less likely to go out for a dose of the arts, and more likely to stay home and enjoy performances in front of their home entertainment centers" (Yin 2003). The effect has been most obvious in music and theater, but even the



Rise of the Leisure Class Around the turn of the twentieth century, industrial productivity and new technologies created new opportunities for leisure among the middle and upper classes.

visual arts are starting to see a change. Most people still visit museums and galleries, but a growing proportion are also looking at pictures online, in magazines, and in books. Here, as in many other ways, technology is moving our recreation inside the home, away from public spaces.

COMMERCIALIZING LEISURE AND RECREATION The second development, and this one has made a greater mark on our leisure time than any other, is the massive increase in the **commodification** of recreational activities: where people formerly made their own fun, they now purchase it as goods and services. What Americans spend on entertainment per year will surpass $700 billion (Cohen 2005), most of it on mass media products (movies, CDs, DVDs, and so on). Television in particular is referred to as "the 800-pound gorilla of leisure time" (Putnam 1995). More than 98 percent of all American households have television, and in fact the average household has two or more TVs in it. In 2007 alone, Americans spent more than $26 billion to purchase digital TV sets. And in 2008, Americans spent an average of well over four and a half hours per day in front of those TVs watching a record number (118) of available channels (U.S. Census Bureau 2008i, 2008j).

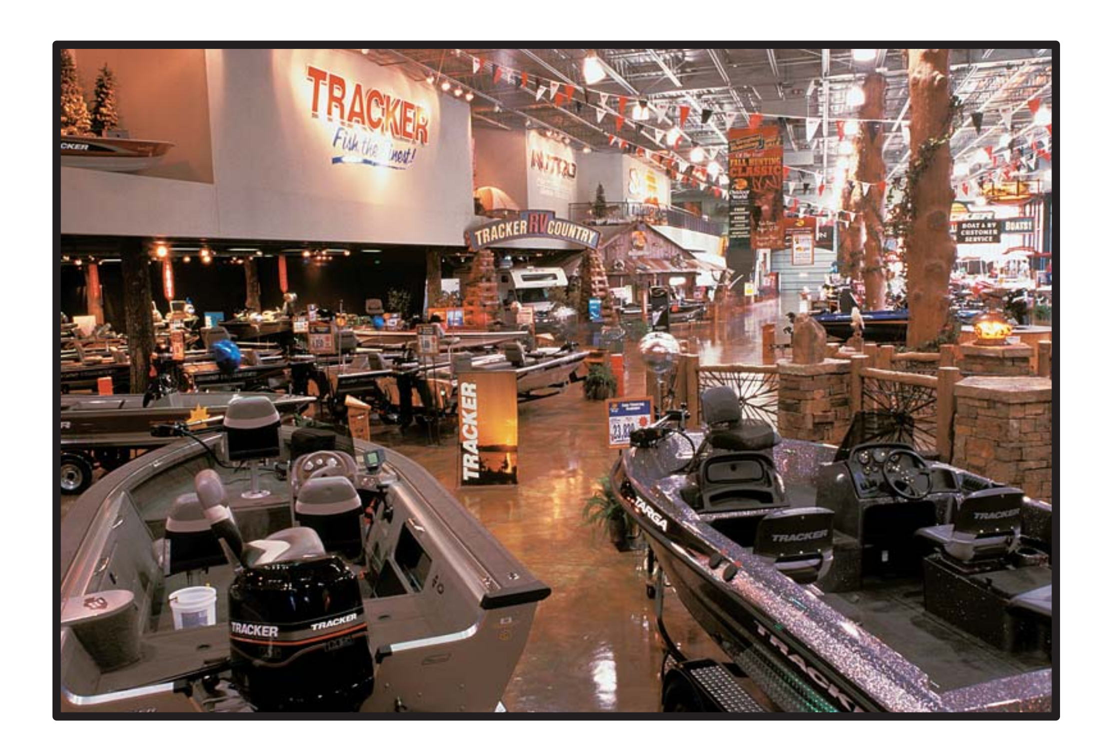
Simple, inexpensive outdoor activities like hiking are still popular, but they increasingly compete with "technologically innovative forms of play such as scuba diving, parasailing, skydiving, and hang-gliding, snowmobiling, and other kinds of off-road travel [that] have opened up new environments for the play experience" (Kraus 1995).

Even those activities that were once necessities, like hunting and fishing, now come with a dizzying array of commodities. Sport fishing relies on expensive boats, lures, rods, and sonar to help locate the fish. Hunting seems to demand special clothing, scent blockers, calls and decoys, infrared vision enhancement, and even special hearing aids that allow hunters to tune in to specific frequencies while stalking particular animals. Instead of visiting the local swimming hole, we pay to visit water parks. Instead of playing softball or soccer, many simply watch sports on TV, played by professionals. In almost every case, our recreation is mediated by goods and services that we seem to "require" in order to have fun.

The ultimate example of the commercialization of leisure, however, is shopping: where the purchase of commodities becomes an end in itself. Recreational shopping is a recent historical development. Until the mid-twentieth century, people shopped mainly to acquire food, clothing, fuel, and other essential goods. But now, in addition, we shop to live out daydreams, to experience a "sensual and emotional high" (Zukin 2004, p. 220). Shopping is no longer just about "bread"—it has also become its own "circus," with over 45,000 malls and shopping centers nationwide to support our habit.

Leisure, money, and business intersect in other ways as well. When you go to a professional baseball or basketball game, chances are that you're there to root for your favorite team, eat hot dogs and drink soda or beer, and generally have a good time with family or friends. Work is probably the last thing on your mind. But what about the people who help provide that experience for you—the parking attendants, ticket-takers, security officers, ushers, food and souvenir vendors, janitors, and maintenance workers? What about the team owners, talent scouts, agents, managers, coaches, trainers, and players themselves? If the game is covered by the media, then you can add announcers, reporters, sportscasters, photographers, camera crews, producers, editors, publishers, advertisers, and more.

commodification the process by which it becomes possible to buy and sell a particular good or service



Commercialized Leisure
Today, many of our forms of leisure and recreation are mediated by commodities, goods, and services that we seem to "require" in order to have fun.

Clearly, the business of recreation and leisure is a big business. To take baseball as an example, in 2008 over 4.3 million people attended the New York Yankees' 81 home games, with an average of about 53,000 per game (ESPN 2008). Millions more tuned in to the televised games. Overall, the businesses that could be broadly classified as providing recreation or entertainment are easily worth trillions of dollars. As such, these industries account for a major part of the U.S. and global economies.

Like a baseball game, almost any kind of activity we enjoy must be supported in some way by others. From hiking in the local foothills (consider how the Parks and Recreation Department might be involved in maintaining trails) to eating an ice cream cone (consider the manufacturing, delivery, and service involved in getting the cone to your hand), many people work to make these activities possible. By some estimates, there are over 25 million leisure and recreation jobs that are staffed in the United States alone.

FORMALIZING RECREATION: ORGANIZATION OVER SPONTANEITY In addition to moving from the public to the private sphere and becoming increasingly commodified, many forms of leisure and recreation seem to have shifted from spontaneous or informal activities to organized and formal. This "development of organization over spontaneity" is illustrated by the rise of Little League baseball as an organized alternative to after-school sand-lot games (Fischer 1994). There is a great deal of debate as to whether the rise of organization is good or bad. Technology has indirectly assisted this process: cell phones, e-mail, the internet, and radio and TV advertising all make it easier to organize people in different geographic locations. Even hiking, what used to be a casual walk in the woods, has become organized. For instance, local chapters of the Sierra Club sponsor regular weekly group hikes, where members are advised about the proper gear to bring and encouraged to carpool.

Leisure: The Opposite of Work?

Work has typically been understood as serious and consequential, while leisure activities are seen as minor and unimportant. Leisure and recreation, though, absorb so much time, energy, and resources that they must represent "important developmental goals and meet other personal needs of both children and adults" (Kraus 1995). In many ways, it is leisure that provides the most "meaningful experiences" and allows people "opportunities to reveal their true selves" (Havitz and Dimanche 1999).

Many people think of their nonwork time as free time, or leisure time (using the terms interchangeably). Therefore, leisure must be the opposite of work, right? Consider the following scenario. With final exams looming around the

corner, Amber, Zack, and Juan—all taking the same sociology class—plan an evening study session at a local café. Amber arrives late from her waitressing job. Zack and Juan have already outlined a few chapters and drunk a few cups of coffee. The three chat for a while before continuing to study. The café is bustling with other students studying, too. At the end of the night, they plan to meet again the following day.

When does work end and leisure begin? In our scenario, it is difficult to decide which is which. Meeting at a café to study seems more like a leisure activity than waitressing at a restaurant. However, studying at a café seems more like work than merely meeting friends to chat.

Rather than understanding leisure as the opposite of work, sociologists see the two as complementary activities within a capitalist economic system—two activities linked by **consumption** (Rojek 1985, 1995). Thus, we work for wages to consume a variety of goods and services, including leisure. As we consume more leisure, we must earn more wages to pay for it. As we have seen, leisure is itself a booming industry, with millions of workers servicing our leisure desires. We choose leisure time to supplement our working lives, and the connection between the two is more than merely oppositional.

So, what is free time? Sociologist Chris Rojek warns us not to equate free time (or nonworking time) with leisure time (1985, 1995, 2000). Consider the following example. When Cheryl finishes work for the day, picks up her children from school, cooks her family an evening meal, helps her children with their schoolwork, and then puts them to bed, has she had any free time? Is free time only the time not spent working for wages? What about an office worker who realizes that he is already prepared for a meeting and thus has a few minutes with nothing to do; are those few minutes free time? Is time spent driving to class or to work or volunteering at a local homeless shelter free time? Or is free time when we have "nothing" to do? If so, what constitutes "nothing"?

Free time is as ambiguous as it is difficult to measure. Arguably, Cheryl continues to work after she leaves her job at 5:00 P.M. and thus has no free time. She, however, may think of spending time with her family as her free time. Rojek argues that leisure, by its very definition, constitutes some kind of choice about how to spend one's time (1985). People make choices to *do* something with their time, whether it's honing their tennis skills or studying a new language. Therefore, free time is not necessarily leisure time.

Leisure and Inequality

Leisure activities can range from sleeping in to building houses for Habitat for Humanity. For some people, watching TV is a leisure activity. For others, leisure means such activities as skydiving or snowboarding. For many, it's both.

consumption the utilization of goods and services, either for personal use or in manufacturing

Sociologists have long associated types of leisure activities with social class. Thus, working-class people do different things with their leisure than wealthy elites do. Interestingly, the wealthy do not necessarily have more leisure time; rather, their work sometimes closely resembles play (Rojek 1997, 2000). Networking on the golf course, for example, is still a kind of work but vastly divergent from teaching school. Also, professional athletes' work would not be considered in the same way by people who play football with their neighbors on the weekends; nor would professional musicians' work by people who play in a local amateur band. Famous actors and actresses work by managing what they eat, "working" out, attending lavish parties, and just looking beautiful for the cameras. In this way, many people strive for leisure activities that resemble the work of elites, celebrities, athletes, and musicians.



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

"Unsports*man*like" Conduct

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, sociologists have noted a dramatic disparity in the reporting of men's and women's sporting events. For instance, Lumpkin and Williams (1991) observed that more than 90 percent of almost 4,000 articles in *Sports Illustrated* focused on men's lives and achievements, and those articles about women athletes were shorter than the ones about men. A comparative study of CNN and ESPN sports shows found a similar gap of reporting on men's and women's sports (Billings and Eastman 2000). More than 90 percent of the coverage on television news and sports highlights programs were devoted to men's sports (Messner, Duncan and Wilms 2005). Not only were women's sports less likely to be broadcast than men's, but they were also presented differently from men's (Messner 2006). Commentators were more likely to infantilize and sexualize female athletes by referring to them as "girls" and calling them by their first names only. Male athletes, in contrast, were almost always referred to as "men" or even "young men" and were usually called by their first and last names. Men's successes were reported with enthusiasm, while women's were more likely to be reported with ambivalence.

TYPE OF NEWS PROGRAM	WOMEN'S SPORTS	MEN'S SPORTS	FEMALE ATHLETES	MALE ATHLETES	TOTAL NUMBER OF SECONDS
Network News					
Local News					
Sports Channel News					

Women's losses were attributed to a stereotypical weakness or ineptness resulting from their physical inferiority, while men's losses were more likely chalked up to "bad luck."

Does this inequality still exist? The following exercises asks you to use existing sources as a research method (refer back to Chapter 3 if you need a review) and to do a content analysis of sports programs in order to answer this question.

1. *Comparing news sources*: Record a regular network (national) news program, a local news program, and a sports channel (Fox, ESPN) news program. Count the amount of broadcast time in seconds given to men's and women's sports and to male and female athletes in each program. Fill in this information in the table at top of the page.

Which type of show demonstrates the most equality in reporting on women's and men's sports?

2. *Comparing sports presentations*: Pick two equivalent televised sporting events, one women's game and one men's game (examples include golf, beach volleyball, tennis, snowboarding, and collegiate basketball). Watch each game, and make a list for each. The list should include notes on the gender of the commentators and how they refer to the players, individually and collectively. Are the athletes referred to as "girls" and "boys," or "women" and "men"? Are they called by their first names only, or first and last names? Do the commentators mention such characteristics as confidence, natural strength, intelligence, tenacity, or aggressiveness? Note also how athletes' successes and losses are presented by the announcers.

Now compare your two lists. How are women and men framed? How is the reporting similar and different for women and men?

There are two options for completing the assigned work.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare your data tables and bring them to class for discussion. Discuss your reactions and conclusions with other students in small-group discussions. Listen for any differences or variations in each other's findings.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay answering the questions posed in this Data Workshop. Make sure to refer to specific data and observations that support your analysis and include your data tables in the appendix.

Spectatorship

As spectators, we have many choices of how to watch a sports or other event. We can attend a live soccer match in our own country or watch it beamed from another country on TV or the internet. We can also choose when to watch it, if we record or TiVo the game. Via the internet, we can participate in chat rooms, gambling rings, and role-playing games associated with our favorite sport. In such ways, spectatorship has become a huge and complex leisure activity.

The Structure of Media Industries

As we have seen, people spend their leisure time engaged in a wide variety of activities. For many Americans, consuming mass media—reading the newspaper, watching TV, listening to the radio, or surfing the internet—accounts for a large portion of this time. Clearly, the media are a major social institution and one with increasing power and importance in the Information Age. At first glance, we might conclude that its purpose is simply to supply information, educate, or entertain. While this is not incorrect, it is a somewhat naïve view of a complex and sophisticated social institution.

The Media and Democracy

One of the first things to remember about the media is their intimate relationship to a democratic system of government. The media have always been seen as both an instrument of the state and a tool for social change. Some of the original struggles during the fight for American independence were waged around these very issues. Early American leaders recognized the importance of news in educating and mobilizing the new citizenry. They were opposed to European governments' control over the media (which consisted at that time



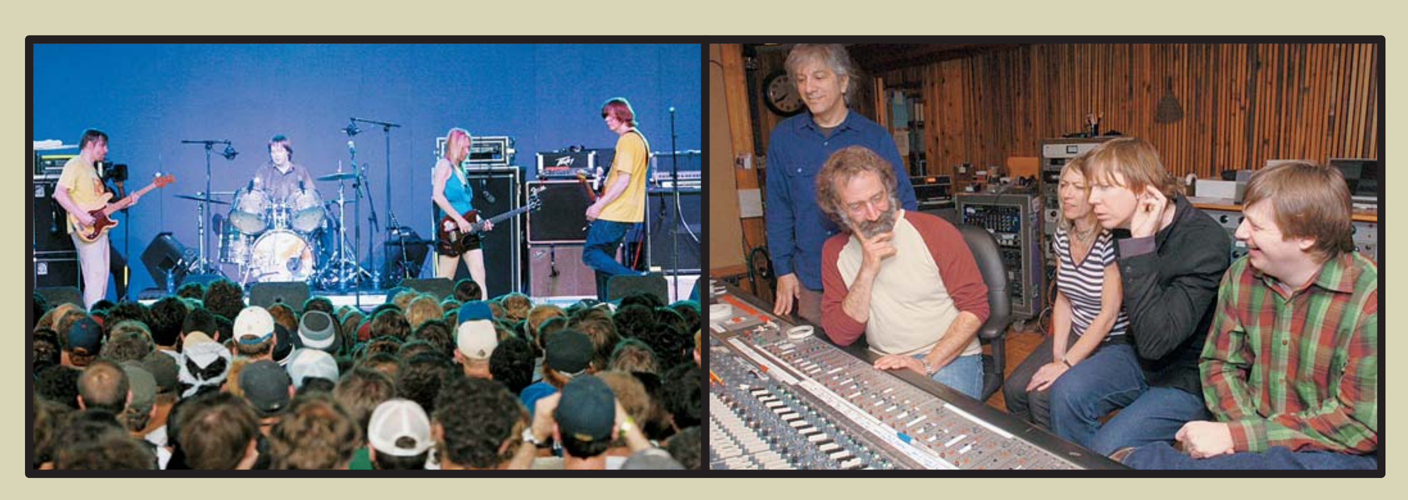
Musicians "Playing" Music

Who wouldn't want to be a rock star? Lear-jetting from city to city, mobbed by adoring fans, staying in four-star hotel suites, partying backstage with models and celebrities. And getting paid tons of money to play, and the operative word is *play*, music.

This stereotype of the rock and roll lifestyle is widespread, and one of the most underappreciated aspects of the work that professional musicians do is that it *is* work. Certainly no musician could deny the perks and privileges that come with success. But they would also say that there is no such thing as an overnight success, that practically everyone has had to pay his dues, and that few ever become rich and famous. Many professional musicians work in relative obscurity as band members, session players, songwriters, or producers. Their careers can be tenuous and short-lived.

Musicians recognize that their work is not manual labor, that they're not out sweating in the fields or laying bricks, nor are they stuck in an office from 9:00 to 5:00. But neither is what they do as fun and easy as it might appear. In order to achieve and maintain success over the years, it is necessary for any musician, regardless of how talented, to work consistently and hard. Professionals typically devote endless hours to learning and practicing their craft. The work conditions can be difficult and the days long and grueling. Writing, recording, rehearsing, and touring require sustained concentration, teamwork, and stamina. The work is often characterized by drudgery and repetition rather than spontaneity and creativity. After years in the business, some musicians suffer from the same kind of disenchantment with their careers that workers in other fields experience, despite whatever notions of romance might have attracted them to music in the first place (Stein 1997).

The rewards of working in any glamorous profession, whether it's music, show business, or sports, probably seem worth any of these difficulties. As social observers, however, we need to consider what goes on behind the scenes and to remember that what looks like play to one person might feel a lot more like work to another.



Playing and Working The band Sonic Youth performing on stage and working in the recording studio. Longevity in the music business is the exception, and remaining successful requires a real work ethic on the part of the musicians.

of books and newspapers) and sought instead to free the press so that it could be used as a voice of the people. That is precisely why the framers of the Constitution included guarantees to freedom of expression and freedom of the press in the First Amendment:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

These are among our most precious and fiercely defended rights as Americans. Furthermore, the press was also to serve as a kind of "**Fourth Estate**," which could independently examine political leaders and give the people another means of checks and balances against the three branches of government.

While the principle of a free press still stands today, it is worth considering just who is free to own what we currently refer to as "the press"; in other words, a media outlet. Who has access to the media, who controls media products, whose voice is reaching a mass audience, and what kind of message is being sent by this powerful instrument of "free speech"?

Fourth Estate the media is considered like a fourth branch of government (after the executive, legislative, and judiciary) and thus serves as another of the checks and balances on power

conglomeration the process by which a single corporation acquires ownership of a variety of otherwise unrelated businesses

synergy a mutually beneficial interaction between parts of an organization that allows them to create something greater than the sum of their individual outputs

merger the legal combination of two companies, usually in order to maximize efficiency and profits by eliminating redundant infrastructure and personnel

concentration the process by which the number of companies producing and distributing a particular commodity decreases, often through mergers and conglomeration

Concentration of Media Power

Media companies are among the many big businesses that drive the American economy, and their profits and losses are closely followed by investors in the stock market. Media products are among the country's biggest exports, and there are almost too many publishers, TV networks, film studios, radio stations, and record companies to name. What is not readily evident from this seeming proliferation is that the businesses are often owned by the same large parent companies. There is currently a trend toward **conglomeration** (McChesney 2000), with huge corporations acquiring media companies as part of their larger holdings. This is how a company like Seagram's, which manufactures alcoholic beverages, came to own Universal (then MCA), which produces film, television, and music. Or how General Electric, which makes everything from washing machines to warheads, came to own the NBC television network.

A typical media conglomerate might comprise many divisions: book and magazine publishing, radio and TV broadcasting, a cable network, a movie studio and theaters, a record company, video distribution, websites, a theme park, even a sports franchise. This allows the company to take advantage of its own organizational structure and market its products across a wide range of different media. Media companies favor products they can "cross-promote" along their various divisions, thus creating what is referred to as **synergy**. For example, a company might produce a movie that is adapted from a book it published, distribute the film to theaters it owns, advertise and review it in company newspapers and magazines, put the soundtrack on its record label, create recognizable characters that appear in commercials or at its theme park, release the movie on its DVD label, and later broadcast it on the company's cable channel and television network.

The cornucopia of media choices is thus somewhat deceiving. If you look at the organizational chart of AOL Time Warner (Figure 14.1), you'll see that many different brands and labels are all really just different company identities within its larger structure. There are actually very few "independent" media producers that can remain viable in such a marketplace. Often, once an independent becomes successful, it is quickly bought out by a larger conglomerate, which is searching for ways to increase revenues. Another trend consists of a **merger** between two or more companies to create an even bigger media giant. The model for this trend, and thus far the largest media company ever, took place in 2000 with the merger between a new media company, AOL (America Online), and an older one, Time Warner.

Mergers and acquisitions associated with conglomeration result in yet another major trend: **concentration**. The ownership of media companies of all kinds is now concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer large conglomerates. Communication researchers who follow media ownership have seen a consistent trend through the 1980s and 1990s characterized by mergers and buyouts and resulting in fewer but larger media companies in the 2000s (McChesney 1997, 2004; Bagdikian 2004). Researchers often refer to the "Big 8" global media conglomerates, down from more than 25 such companies just a decade or two ago, that now dominate the media industries (Kleinenberg 2007, Shah 2007). While few in number, these media giants keep getting bigger. That leaves only a small percentage of media companies truly independent from this corporate reality.

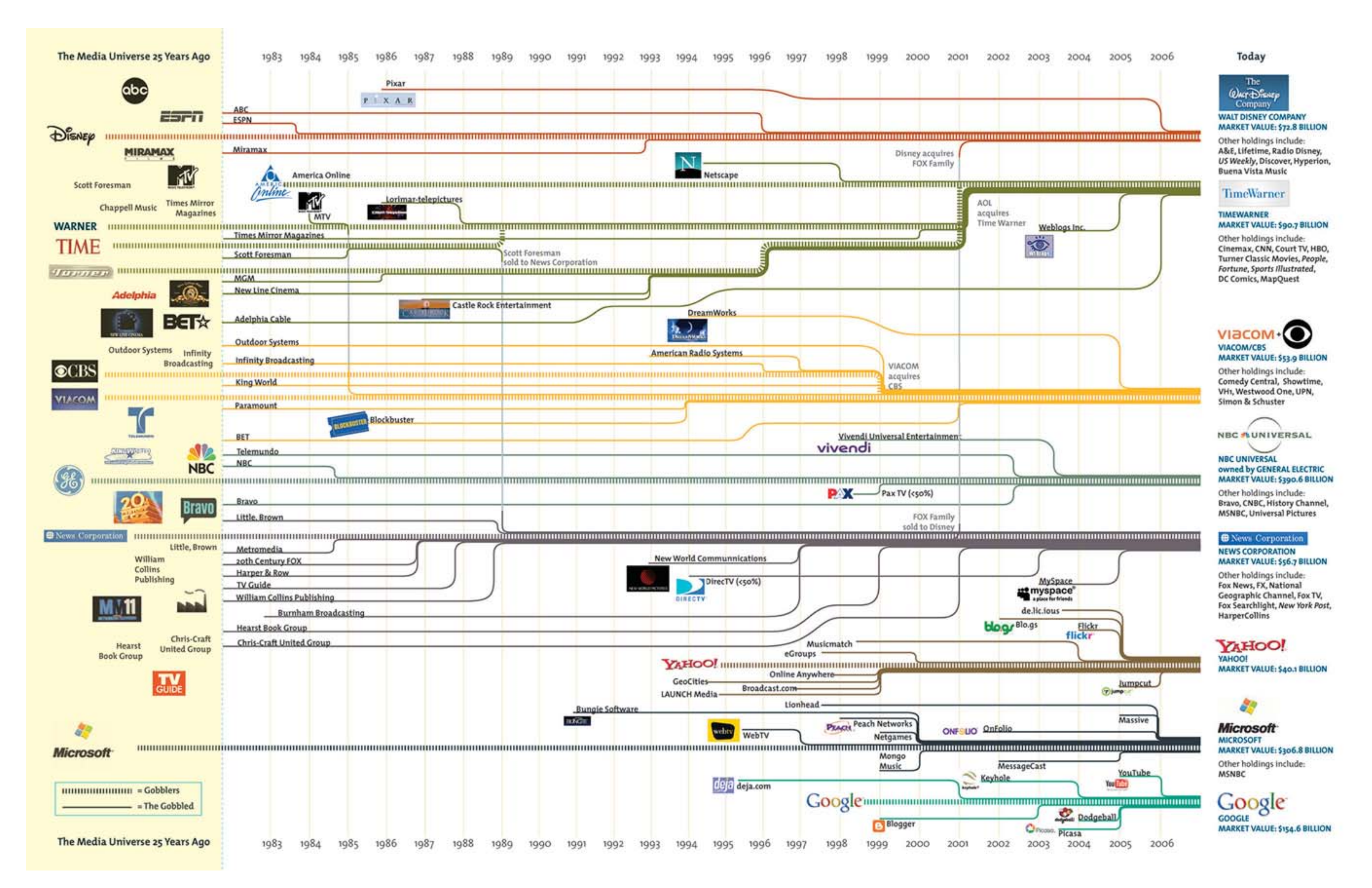


FIGURE 14.1 **The Increasing Concentration of Media Outlets**

SOURCE: Foundation for National Progress 2007; Dmitry Krasny/Deka Design



Postmodern Consumers
How has Apple changed the arrangements between those who make products and those who distribute them?

Two government agencies, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), are charged with regulating the large conglomerates. The FCC has established some restrictions on media-outlet ownership by any single company in order to avoid a **monopoly** in any one market. Otherwise, one media giant might be able to own all the newspapers and TV and radio stations in a region, effectively stifling any competition and potentially providing a single voice for information where several serve a democracy better. And the SEC is involved in **antitrust legislation**, governing mergers between companies and further discouraging monopolies from forming. However, in recent years increasing **deregulation**, the reduction or removal of government restrictions on the media industry, has allowed companies to gain control of ever-larger chunks of the media market. These decisions are often fiercely debated by the Congress, media companies, and media watchdog groups. Social critics are concerned about the increasing concentration and its possible consequences for a democratic society that values freedom of the press and a plurality of voices. If the largest companies are allowed to control the dissemination of information, does that undermine the constitutional rights of average citizens to have their voices heard?

monopoly a situation in which there is only one individual or organization, without competitors, providing a particular good or service

antitrust legislation laws designed to maintain competition in the marketplace by prohibiting monopolies, price fixing, or other forms of collusion among businesses

deregulation reduction or removal of government controls from an industry to allow for a free and efficient marketplace

POWER SHIFTS IN THE MEDIA INDUSTRY—APPLE EDITION So how will the structure of the media industry change in the future? One answer is being provided by Apple and the iPods that Apple has made ubiquitous. Apple represents a fundamental shift in the way that media industries work, with power transferring from the companies that produce products to companies that distribute them. In this way, Apple is part of a postmodern economy, as David Harvey described it, where the need to sell more products faster will lead to "a shift from the consumption of goods and into the consumption of services" including "entertainments, spectacles, happenings, and distractions" (Harvey 1990, p. 285). Although Harvey predicted this shift back in 1990 before the mp3 even existed in its current form, he had noticed that there are "limits to the accumulation and turnover of physical goods" making more "ephemeral" products like an mp3 or a downloaded movie ideal for an economy that needs to sell more this year than it did last year.

This business model has served Apple well. Even the physical products it sells, the Macintosh computer, the iPod, and the iPhone, are all designed to allow customers

to buy other things—software, music, movies, and games. In fact, it's even possible to buy a song from iTunes without involving anyone but the record company that owns the song and Apple: "the Web browser software (Safari), the computer media player (iTunes), the portable digital music player (iPod), the streaming technology to play music videos (Quicktime), the software that creates the service (WebObjects), the computer itself (Macintosh) and the operating system (MacOS)" (Strauss 2003). What is becoming clear is that in a digital age, the companies that provide access to entertainment and media will be at least as important as the companies that actually make the entertainment.



Are Video Game Ratings Effective? The Entertainment Software Rating Board created ratings such as "T" for teen and "M" for mature for video games in the 1990s.

New Voices in Media

Even in today's heavily concentrated media market, there are still opportunities for alternative voices to be heard. These voices, though, are often confined to small, marginal outlets. Bloggers (people who publish a weblog, or online diary) and podcasters (people who make audio broadcasts over the web) are able to circumvent the constraints of commercial radio and print journalism to transmit their opinions and musical sensibilities to an (admittedly small) audience. Online and print "zines" (underground self-publications) are created by individuals who feel that a topic close to their hearts (such as a favorite band or comic book or an important political issue) is not getting proper treatment from the mainstream press. Punk rock bands like the 1970s' Sex Pistols and New York Dolls, as well as their more contemporary descendants like Fugazi, Bikini Kill, and Sleater-Kinney, produced and promoted their music outside the major record-label system, as part of a "D.I.Y." (do it yourself) movement (Shippers 2002). Even afternoon talk shows like *Montel Williams* or the *Tyra Banks Show*, as bizarre as they may sometimes seem, have provided an opportunity for disenfranchised, nonmainstream individuals (like transsexuals or recovering addicts) to be heard by the masses (Gamson 1999).

Self-Regulation and Censorship

Another area of intense debate about the media industries revolves around the content they produce and government censorship. The FCC imposes regulations on what the media may produce, once again qualifying the notion of absolute freedom of expression. As you may be aware, certain types of speech are not protected under the Constitution. Material considered to be obscene, for example, is illegal. The criteria used to define obscenity are based on a momentous 1959 Supreme Court decision, *Roth vs. United States*. According to the ruling, child pornography and other "material which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interest" are considered obscene. However, the line between "indecent" material, which is restricted but not forbidden, and obscene material is sometimes hard to draw.

Over the past several decades, various media industries have turned to self-regulation of the materials they produce, often in the face of threats of censorship and in an effort to avoid outside regulation by government agencies. These efforts first began in 1968 when the Motion Picture Association of America established the movie ratings with which you are likely familiar. Those ratings are G, PG, PG-13, and R, and more recently NC-17 to distinguish material unfit for anyone under 17 from adult or pornographic material carrying an X rating. Next was the music business in 1985, when the Recording Industry Association of America agreed to place warning stickers on certain albums containing songs about drugs, sex, violence, and other potentially objectionable subjects. These labels ("Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics") were the recording industry's response to pressure from Senate hearings and lobbying from the Parents' Music Resource Center, headed by Tipper Gore (wife of then Senator and future Vice President Al Gore).

The 1990s ushered in self-regulation for other media industries. The Entertainment Software Rating Board established a rating system for video games in 1993 based on age-appropriateness. In 1997, television programs began featuring a ratings system that not only suggests the appropriate age for viewers but also warns of violence (real-life or cartoon), sex (including dialogue with sexual innuendo), and offensive language. The "V-chip" in TVs allows parents to block reception of violent programs altogether.

These voluntary measures at regulating content, self-imposed by the media industries, acknowledge the concern

hypodermic needle theory (magic bullet theory) a theory that explains the effects of media as if their contents simply entered directly into the consumer, who is powerless to resist their influence

uses and gratifications paradigm approaches to understanding media effects that focus on individuals' psychological or social needs that consumption of various media fulfills

that some material is unsuitable, especially for children. Some studies of the effectiveness of these measures indicate that children are still being exposed to objectionable material and that parents may be misled if they believe ratings systems are preventing their children from having access to those materials (Garry and Spurlin 2007).

Debates about the content and power of the media rage on. Some claim that media content, especially when it is violent or sexual in nature, has a negative effect on society and should therefore be restricted; others support a media-free market or believe that the right to free speech or artistic freedom should in no way be infringed. These issues are frequently in the spotlight, usually in the wake of some controversial event such as the Super Bowl 2004 halftime, during which singer Janet Jackson's breast was exposed as the result of a "wardrobe malfunction." Despite general agreement about the power of the media, their exact influence on viewers is difficult to measure. In the next section, we will consider a range of theories about the effects of the media.

Mass Media Consumption: Passive vs. Active Audiences

The influence or effects of the media have been studied by scholars in a range of disciplines including psychology, communications, and sociology. The theories they have generated run along a spectrum, from the media having great power and influence over audiences, to their having little or none, to audiences themselves being central in the creation of meaning. It is worth examining what each of these theories has to say about the effects of media on society and the individual and to consider the applicability of any theory to the postmodern, digital world in which we now live.

The Hypodermic Needle (or Magic Bullet) Theory

In the early years of mass media, it was thought that audience members of all sorts (including readers) were passive recipients of content and that whatever meaning was in the "texts" they consumed was transmitted, unaltered, and absorbed straight into their consciousness. (The term *text* is a general one that can include sound and image as well as print.) This notion was contained in the model known as the **hypodermic needle theory** (or **magic bullet theory**). The assumption was that, like an injection, media content was shot directly into the audience members, who responded instantaneously to its stimulus (Lazarsfeld and Katz 1955). One of the key examples often cited to support this theory was the 1938 radio broadcast of H. G. Wells's short story "War of the Worlds" narrated by Orson Welles. The radio show used a mock news-bulletin format and was played uninterrupted by commercial breaks. Listeners who tuned in after the beginning of the show did not realize it was merely a dramatization of a Martian invasion. It was reported that audience members numbering in the millions actually believed the "news" was true and were so frightened as to have sparked widespread panic.

Minimal Effects Theories

Media scholars quickly realized that the hypodermic needle theory was not accurate or applicable for the most part—that audience members were not as passive or easily persuaded as first believed and that the various forms of media themselves were not as all-powerful in their influence over individuals. A number of related theories were developed during the 1960s and 70s that proposed the media had limited or minimal effects.

Instead of asking, "What do media do to people?" scholars began to ask, "What do people do with media?" (Severin and Tankard 1997). The **uses and gratifications paradigm** contains several theories that focus on a more actively engaged audience member (Katz 1959). Blumler and Katz (1974) highlighted five areas in which audiences sought gratification and fulfilled needs through their use of the media. First, audiences could achieve some sense of escape from reality; second, audiences could use media for social interaction, forming relationships to characters, or conversing with others about products and programs; third, they could gain some aspect of personal identity by incorporating elements found in the media into their everyday lives; fourth, the media could serve to inform and educate audiences; and fifth, audience members could consume media purely for the sake of entertainment.

Many media scholars have been interested in the persuasive powers of the media, whether they were in used in advertising to get consumers to buy products or used in the political arena to sway public opinion or to garner votes.

Two related theories suggest that the influence of the media is more limited than marketing executives or campaign managers might otherwise wish. **Reinforcement theory** argues that individuals tend to seek out and listen to only those messages that are in alignment with their existing attitudes and beliefs. Thus audience members typically tune out anything that might seem too challenging and instead prefer only those messages that support what they already believe (Atkin 1973, 1985; Klapper 1960). The **agenda-setting theory** focuses on how the mass media can influence the public by the way stories are presented in the news (McCombs and Shaw 1972, 1977). Depending upon which stories are chosen as newsworthy and how much time and space are devoted to their coverage, the public then gets a sense of the value or importance of any given event. The media may not be able to tell audiences what to think, but they do set the agenda for what (stories) to think about. Finally, the **two-step flow model** of communication suggests that audiences get much of the information from "opinion leaders" who can convey and explain important news rather than from more direct or firsthand sources (Lazarsfeld and Katz 1955). Certainly someone like Oprah Winfrey is known for her influence and can introduce millions of her audience members to whatever is her latest concern.

Active Audiences and Cultural Studies

Media research since the 1980s and 90s has focused largely on **active audiences** suggesting that media consumers bring to the experience different **interpretive strategies**. (You may remember a similar discussion of cultural consumption from Chapter 4.) This approach argues that different individuals, because of their different experiences, perspectives, and personalities, may respond to media content in unique ways. This means that whatever meanings may be inherent in texts, consumers may read them in the intended ways but can also modify and even invert the meanings of texts depending upon their own backgrounds and purposes.

Working within the cultural studies perspective, Stuart Hall's **encoding/decoding model** (1980) combines elements of the hypodermic needle/magic bullet and active audience theories. This model assumes on the one hand that specific ideological messages are loaded into cultural products and that they therefore have the potential to influence individuals, especially with regard to promoting the interests of capitalist elites. On the other hand, individuals may respond to messages embedded in the media in a variety of ways. In fact, when faced with ideologically encoded cultural products like movies or music, for example, we can engage in "cultural resistance" or choose "oppositional" or "against the grain" readings of products, subverting their meaning. For example, Madonna's classic video "Like a Virgin" was seen by many cultural critics as sexually exploitative and demeaning, while teen fans exercising interpretive resistance subverted the dominant meaning, embracing the video as empowering to them as young women.

Henry Jenkins extends the model to something he calls **textual poaching** (1992), wherein audience



K/S or "Slash" In these examples of textual poaching, *Star Trek* fans manipulate old footage in order to create new stories that suggest a very different interpretation of Kirk and Spock's relationship than the one portrayed on the show.

reinforcement theory theory that suggests that audiences seek messages in the media that reinforce their existing attitudes and beliefs and are thus not influenced by challenging or contradictory information

agenda-setting theory theory that the mass media can set the public agenda by selecting certain news stories and excluding others, thus influencing what audiences think about

two-step flow model theory on media effects that suggests audiences get information through opinion leaders who influence their attitudes and beliefs, rather than through direct firsthand sources

active audiences a term used to characterize audience members as active participants in "reading" or constructing the meaning of the media they consume

interpretive strategies the ideas and frameworks that audience members bring to bear on a particular media text to understand its meaning

encoding/decoding model a theory of media combining models that privilege the media producer and models that view the audience as the primary source of meaning; this theory recognizes that media texts are created to deliver specific messages and that individuals actively interpret them

textual poaching Henry Jenkins's term describing the ways that audience members manipulate an original cultural product to create a new one; a common way for fans to exert some control over the media they consume



Fan-Celebrity Relations

Interacting with a god or gods, spirits, or ancestors is compulsory in many cultures—but what about our own? In his book *Imaginary Social Worlds*, John Caughey (1984) argues that the contemporary American equivalents are relationships between fans and celebrities (including politicians and athletes). These are people with whom few of us have actual, face-to-face interaction but whom many of us feel we know—sometimes intimately. "It is simply taken for granted," Caughey observes, "that an American will know about a huge swarming throng of unmet figures through his consumption of the various media" (p. 32). Celebrities can be important in the lives of ordinary people—as role models, objects of desire, or just friendly figures encountered daily on the TV screen. Just because these relationships are one-sided doesn't mean that they aren't relationships.

If there was ever an athlete, actor, musician, or politician whom you admired but never met, then you have engaged in some version of the asymmetrical relationships Caughey outlines in his book. Maybe you read a magazine article or watched a TV show to learn more about this person; maybe you bought a ticket to a performance with the hopes of seeing him or her after the show. Most of us put very little energy into developing these relationships—frankly, we don't have to, as we are bombarded with information about celebrities all the time. We can't help but acquire information about their professional and personal lives (Ehrenreich 1990).

In addition to reading *People* and *Us* magazines or watching *Entertainment Tonight* and *Access Hollywood*, some fans attend organized activities such as book signings or store openings in which face-to-face contact with a celebrity is available and highly regulated (Ferris 2001). At these prestaged events, buying a ticket and standing in line will yield a brief, formulaic encounter with the celebrity in which a few words are exchanged, an autograph is signed, and the line moves on. Unstaged encounters ("celebrity sightings")—at the supermarket, say, or in line at the post office—are exciting, but by definition uncertain (Ferris 2004a).

Fan-staged encounters help solve this problem: here the fan seeks out and uses information about the celebrity in ways that put the fan in control. For example, one avid fan sneaked onto a television studio lot and came away with a celebrity address list: "We couldn't get onto the set, but I took a bunch of stuff, papers, from the bike messenger's basket when it was parked. I figure that's not stealing, they can just make more Xeroxes. Anyway, the addresses were on it. . . . they live in the Hills, mostly, and I can go by their houses" (Ferris 2001, p. 39). Fan-staged encounters avoid the restrictions of prestaged events and the unpredictability of celebrity sightings. They partially solve the problem of asymmetry that characterizes fan-celebrity relations—fans can ensure that they will be able to see and maybe speak with their favorite celebrity, as though the relationship were an ordinary personal one. It should be noted, however, that fan-staged encounters usually occur without the consent of the celebrity herself, which means that they can feel unwelcome and even dangerous to the celebrity, even if the fan may mean no harm.



A Prestaged Event Fans meet actor Johnny Depp on the red carpet at a movie premiere.

Recently the internet has opened up new means for fans wishing to encounter celebrities and improved the odds of having an actual celebrity sighting. Gawker.com, TMZ.com, and PerezHilton.com are a few of a proliferation of websites that are making big business out of celebrity watching. They all carry the latest gossip and prized candid photos of the stars that generate millions of web traffic visitors every month. Gawker, which is based in New York City, distinguished itself by introducing Gawker Stalker, a new feature

that tries to visually pinpoint celebrities as soon as they are spotted. In order to help readers in their "celebrity-hunting adventures," Gawker encourages fans to send the whereabouts of any celebrity they might see, whether at a restaurant, dry cleaners, or market, and Gawker will immediately post the exact location using Google Maps. With more and more people accessing the internet via handheld devices like the iPhone and Blackberry, news about celebrities travels fast, as do those wishing to chase them.

Which brings us to the phenomenon of real celebrity stalking. Stalking is usually defined as any unwanted pursuit or threat and can be practiced by ex-spouses, business rivals, or total strangers. But the most familiar type is celebrity stalking. Security experts usually try to keep the details under wraps, but it is safe to say that most public figures have a number of potentially dangerous fans whose activities are monitored by both public law enforcement and private security firms. Several celebrities have been killed (ex-Beatle John Lennon, actress Rebecca Shaeffer, Tejano star Selena) or seriously wounded (actress Theresa Saldana) by obsessed fans. Others have endured repeated home break-ins (singer Madonna, director Steven Spielberg, talk-show host David Letterman, actor Brad Pitt), and many are plagued by "pop-up" visits from fans who have followed them surreptitiously and then revealed themselves in airports, restaurants, or public restrooms. Threatening letters are sometimes sent to the stars' management offices and even delivered to their home addresses—a danger signal, say stalking experts. In order to protect Hollywood celebrities and other public figures from dangerous fans, the Los Angeles Police Department has created a division called the Threat Management Unit, and California further led the nation in passing antistalking laws in 1990 that have served as models for those in other states. Unfortunately, legislation doesn't deter all stalkers.

For some people, celebrity stalking is a professional obligation. These people include members of the press, and especially the paparazzi, freelance photographers who pursue celebrities in order to get candid shots. Paparazzi may charter helicopters, hack through forests, or scale castle walls in such daring stunts as the two photographers dressed in camouflage who attempted to photograph the new twin babies of actors Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. Their intrusiveness can even provoke violence from a celebrity, as witnessed in singer Britney Spears beating the car of a member of the paparazzi with the wooden handle of an umbrella, or rapper Kanye West smashing the expensive camera equipment belonging to another. In some instances it is actually the photographer who is assaulted, as in the case of one who took a punch in the jaw from actor Alec Baldwin.

While paparazzi can be annoying to celebrities, we consume their products every day. When we read supermarket tabloids, watch TV entertainment shows, or surf the web for photos of our favorite actors, we support the paparazzi's activities—because they support ours. They feed our imaginations, provide us with information about celebrities, and help us envision the worlds of those who are part of our everyday lives yet not personally known to us.



interpretive community a group of people dedicated to the consumption and interpretation of a particular cultural product and who create a collective, social meaning for the product

role model an individual who serves as an example for others to strive toward and emulate

members take the original product and manipulate it themselves—often to tell stories or express ideologies very different from the original. For example, fans of the TV show *Star Trek* have used videotaped programs and home-editing equipment to create stories (called "K/S," or "Slash") in which Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock are not just best friends and coworkers, but passionate gay lovers. This oppositional restructuring indicates that viewers can read different meanings into the text than were intended by the producers—indeed, can reproduce the text in order to make those meanings central.

Interpretive Communities and Shared Meanings

Responding to cultural texts is thus an exercise in the distribution of power. The more active the audience is in interpreting the text, the less control the producers have over the messages that are communicated. While you may not go so far as one of Jenkins's "textual poachers," neither are you a passive recipient of predigested pop-culture pabulum. Your consumption of media (film, television, music, books) and live performance (concerts, theater, sports) is active in the sense that you contribute your own interpretive resources—context, experience, and perspective. And to the extent that you share these experiences with others, you may find that you are part of an **interpretive community**—a group of like-minded people who enjoy cultural products in the same way. The concept of the interpretive community is usually attributed to literary theorist Stanley Fish (1980), who believed that although an author might have intended a certain meaning in a text, it is individual readers who inevitably interpret the text in their own ways, thus creating the potential for an almost infinite number of meanings of the same text. The fact that we usually end up interpreting the same books in the same ways has to do with shared culture and frameworks that members of the same interpretive communities have in common. Janice Radway (1991), in her ethnography of romance-novel readers, argued that cultural context is the reason that readers share similar sets of reading strategies and interpretive codes. Whether visiting a museum exhibit, going to a concert, or watching a TV show, members of interpretive communities bring with them shared sensibilities about understanding cultural products through their own particular lens.

Recreation, Leisure, and Relationships

Our recreational choices can lead us to form unique bonds with others. Some of those bonds take the form of **role model** relationships, in which more prominent members of a leisure or recreational subculture serve as examples for us to strive toward. In the 1990s, for example, kids chanted "I wanna be like Mike" to communicate their admiration for Chicago Bulls player Michael Jordan. Tiger Woods, who in 1997 became the youngest golfer and first person of color ever to win the Masters Tournament, generated the same type of hero worship among youngsters, who intoned "I am Tiger Woods" as they stepped up to the tee in record numbers. Role models like Woods and Jordan inspire us to excel in sports and in other areas as well—since his retirement from basketball, Jordan has become a savvy businessman and is involved in such charitable organizations as the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

Some would argue that sports figures are not appropriate role models: even though they must work hard in order to excel, they still possess unique skills and talents that the rest of us don't. Another basketball player, Charles Barkley of the Houston Rockets, in fact asserted "I am not a role model," arguing that parents and teachers were more appropriate examples for children to follow. And interestingly, each of the above quotes ("I wanna be like Mike," "I am Tiger Woods," *and* "I am not a role model") was used in Nike commercials—to inspire consumers to buy expensive sporting goods.

Aside from celebrity role models, we also build relationships with people who share our interests—our soccer teammates, fellow collectors of *Star Wars* memorabilia, bluegrass aficionados, or backgammon players. These are important members of our social world.

Leisure and Community

Your friendship with the people you play pick-up basketball with every Thursday evening, the members of your gardening club, or the folks you watch *Survivor* with is unlikely to be confined solely to basketball, gardening, and television;

your bonds probably extend into other areas of your lives as well. But it is your shared interests that have brought you together, and these activities speak to the heart of Emile Durkheim's pioneering sociological questions about community and social cohesion, first asked over 100 years ago and still central today.

Some scholars argue that in contemporary society, in important social groups such as family, church, and labor union, group values are eclipsed by the rhetoric of radical individual rights. For instance, dinner with the family might be passed up in favor of mother's Pilates lesson or a brother's going to a friend's house to watch the fight on TV. Or the Catholic requirement of attending mass each week might be fulfilled only on Christmas and Easter. Sociologist Amitai Etzioni is the leading proponent of a movement that seeks to remedy this problem: **communitarianism** argues that individual rights do not cancel out collective responsibility. The movement is an attempt to rebuild a sense of group values that benefit all rather than merely the individual. Etzioni's version of communitarianism (1996) is specific in its proposals about how to balance individual rights with social responsibilities. But the question for us here is this: are bonds based on shared leisure interests enough to constitute a sense of group responsibility compatible with communitarian aims? Or are basketball, gardening, television, and the like just too flimsy a basis for real group identity?

Robert Bellah, whose work has been referred to in earlier chapters, has a potential answer for us. He argues that bonds based on shared interests like those mentioned above don't create real community. Rather, such groups constitute **lifestyle enclaves**, which are different from real communities in that they are likely to remain private and segmented, focused on their own shared interests rather than involved in the larger group life (Bellah, Sullivan, and Tipton et al. 1985). So you and your fellow ball players, gardeners, or TV fans may find your connections to each other to be personally rewarding, but you aren't necessarily contributing to the common good. Or are you?

In Kerry Ferris's research on *Star Trek* and soap opera fan clubs, she found that while people in these clubs did initially bond solely because of their dedication to particular TV shows, these bonds developed over time in ways that Bellah might not have predicted. Eventually the groups branched out away from their narrow focus and began to pursue things like charitable fund-raising and community service projects that expanded the boundaries of their lifestyle enclave. One *Star Trek* fan club, for example, raised money to help an animal welfare organization that was sponsored by *Trek* actor William Shatner; while their contributions were guided by their specific interests (how many other people even know what Shatner's favorite charity is?), their community spirit was obvious. So perhaps a sense of shared mission within a small group of TV viewers or tulip enthusiasts is not incompatible with a larger sense of social responsibility after all. You can indulge your individual sense of play and work for the common good as well.

communitarianism a political and moral philosophy focused on strengthening civil society and communal bonds

lifestyle enclaves groups of people drawn together by shared interests, especially those relating to hobbies, sports, and media

Collectors and Hobbyists

Sports are not the only recreational pursuits that draw people together. Many collectors' groups organize annual conventions so that members with shared interests can hobnob with one another for one intensive weekend. Collectors of Dolly Parton memorabilia, for example, meet once a year in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, to buy, sell, and trade Dolly-related items and share their love of the country music diva. Fans of a different kind of dolly, Barbie, also meet annually to connect with others who collect Barbie, her friends, and all their accessories (in 2001, this convention was hijacked by fans of the Ken doll, with the goal of making Barbie's long-suffering boyfriend the star of the show!). And at yet another weekend convention, collectors gather together to "keep history alive" and honor real military heroes both past and present, by buying, selling, and trading 12 inch action figures die cast in the image of notable members of the armed forces.

But collectors and hobbyists no longer need to meet face-to-face at a convention or weekend workshop. The internet has helped spawn a myriad of virtual communities where enthusiasts can interact online. Do-it-yourselfers and garage woodworkers who might normally work alone have found compatriot crafters with whom they can converse. Connecting with others who share the same interests is facilitated by blogs, chat rooms, wikis, and auction sites like eBay where collectors and hobbyists can meet, organize activities, swap tips, and search for the perfect purchases (Rubel and Rosman 2001).

Hangouts: The Third Place

Away from work or school, where else do you spend your time? Researcher Robert Putnam (2000) laments that, in the United States at least, you will probably be watching

Global Perspective

The Other Football

Do you know the rules for cricket? What's up with the Canadians and curling? And why can't anyone get Americans to care about football? No, not *that* football—the other one. What Americans call soccer but everyone else calls football is wildly popular internationally, but it has not yet taken off in the United States, especially at the professional level.

In the United States, soccer is primarily a youth sport; of the country's 18 million soccer players, only about 5 million are adults, and many of these are part of a recent influx of foreign-born players. American interest in soccer spikes every four years when the World Cup games roll around; otherwise, major league soccer is not even as popular as ice hockey and lags well behind the professional sports behemoths of football, baseball, and basketball. The rest of the world, however, think Americans are crazy. In almost every other country, football (soccer) is a major sport—there are local and national competitions between teams and international competition between national teams. Salaries for top players often surpass deals made with top American athletes, with tens of millions of dollars going to players like Thierry Henry, Ronaldinho, and Zinedine Zidane. Perhaps another season of watching former England captain David Beckham, who signed a very lucrative deal to play with the Los Angeles Galaxy team, will draw more attention to soccer in the United States.



It's not just the money and the competition that make international soccer unique—it's the fans. More specifically, the rowdy and violent fans often referred to as "hooligans." Violence in American sports is certainly not unheard of (ever been to an Oakland Raiders game?), but the scale of soccer hooliganism overseas is in another league entirely. The British, especially, are infamous for the mobs of "yobs" (slang for hooligans) who cause damage both in Great Britain and elsewhere in the soccer-playing world. Soccer actually has a violent history: in the medieval period, entire towns would participate in soccer matches to resolve disputes, and kings and queens at times had the game banned because of violence. In those days, it was the players who had to be concerned for their safety; since the rise of contemporary hooliganism, spectators must also be wary.

television at home rather than gathering in a public place to talk with others. But if you lived in France, you might head to the corner café; in Germany, the neighborhood Bierstube; in Greece, the local taverna. Establishments such as these bear the label **third place** (after home and work, which are first and second). They are informal public places where people come together regularly for conversation and camaraderie. Roy Oldenburg (1999) worries that there are few such places left in the United States—and that we might be suffering as a society because of it.

third place any informal public place where people come together regularly for conversation and camaraderie when not at work or at home

You know the place—the local diner with a counter that's always full of old men, talking about fishing for bluegill, complaining about the cost of prescription medications,

Since the 1960s, there have been hundreds of deaths caused by upheaval at soccer matches. Although most soccer-playing countries endure some form of hooliganism, the English yobs are infamous and were, until recently, the only fans who traveled abroad with their teams and brought their violence with them (Taylor 2000). One of the most notorious riots took place in Brussels, in 1985, at a match between the English team from Liverpool and the Italian team Juventus. The Liverpool yobs, later revealed by videotape to have come to the match with ski masks and weapons, instigated attacks on the rival fans, which resulted in a crush of people trying to flee. In the end, 39 Italian spectators were killed, and British teams were banned from European competition for five years (Haley and Johnston 1998).

Some theorists speculate that the fanaticism of hooligans is only an excuse to be violent. Skinheads and other racists, for example, sometimes use soccer matches to broadcast their beliefs. Others speculate that fandom can develop into a nationalistic fervor that increases the likelihood of violence. For example, for British fans who feel united against a foreign team while in a foreign country, it may be easy to feel both isolated and compelled to defend the honor of their team and country—especially when emotions are already heightened with the fury of athletic competition (King 1995).

Why is true mob violence rare in the United States? Is it because U.S. teams are seldom involved in truly international competition? Or because there are so many professional sports and teams to follow? Or is it simply because hooliganism is endemic to a sport with a long history of violence—the real football—which is not yet widely popular in this country?



Yobs English football fans are particularly famous for their fanaticism. Here, English hooligans (rear) chase a French supporter (front) in Charleroi, Belgium. At the Euro 2000 championships, English fans attacked celebrating French supporters who drove in a convoy through the city center.

or bemoaning the irresponsibility of youth. You might have thought such talk trivial or silly, but the interactions and relationships that develop in third places are important far beyond any specific conversational content.

Coffeehouse, bar, or barbershop—third places are more than just hangouts. Oldenburg argues that they are core settings for informal but essential aspects of public and community life. They provide opportunities to connect with others in ways that relieve alienation and anomie, problems Durkheim attributed to modern society. And there are more generalized benefits to society as well—the feeling of public spirit generated in third places can strengthen **civil society**, increase political awareness and participation, and sustain

civil society those organizations, institutions, and interactions outside government, family, and work that promote social bonds and the smooth functioning of society



Changing the World

Ecotourism

Two sociology professors fly into Costa Rica for their spring break vacation. From the capital of San Jose, they hire a local pilot to fly them to the coast. When they reach the coastal airport, an open-air set of wooden benches with a simple covering, they take an old bus to their hotel. Their "hotel room" turns out to be a treehouse with screens rather than walls. It's March and thus extremely hot and humid. There is no air conditioning, electricity, or running water in their treehouse. They must climb down to use an outhouse. During the hottest parts of the day, they nap in the shade. In the early mornings and evenings, they visit the rainforests and nearby beaches. They are careful to stay on trails, leave no trash, and respect the rainforest.

The professors have planned their trip to be as **eco-friendly** as possible. Thus, they chose primitive lodging over a resort with modern conveniences and hiking into the rainforests rather than diving into the coastal reefs. They use mass transportation rather than renting a car. They researched various means of visiting the rainforests and beaches to avoid using companies that exploit workers or harm the environment. Does this type of travel lessen the negative impacts of tourism?

Ecotourism is characterized by the efforts of tourists and the travel industry to lessen the negative consequences of tourism on the environment as well as local cultures. Thus, ecotourism generally promotes consciousness about environmentally and culturally sensitive travel options. Tourists are often from highly industrialized nations in North America, Europe, and Australia, and they usually visit less developed nations in Central and South America as well as in Africa. Sociologists who study tourism and the travel industries have mixed views about the effectiveness of ecotourism. Some argue that ecotourism is merely consumerism with a "green" wrapping, while others argue that it offers tourists less invasive travel options for enjoying precious natural resources as well as foreign cultures.

Every year, for example, many tourists want to visit tropical rainforests, even though they may be aware of the conservation efforts to protect them. The question arises: should ecotourists avoid environmentally sensitive locations such as rainforests or the habitats of endangered species? Some sociologists say no, because ecotourism educates travelers about environmentalism and foreign cultures, as well as bringing in revenue to economically depressed areas. Stamou and Paraskevopoulos's (2003) study of visitors to a national park where endangered species of condors live found that visitors were more likely to be motivated by enjoyment of the park rather than environmentalism; however, they still gained an appreciation for the condors and the efforts to maintain their habitats.



Finca Esperanza Verde Ecolodge in Nicaragua

Other sociologists argue that the "eco" part of the label is a marketing technique to lure tourists seeking "guilt-free" travel. The idea behind this view is that most travelers understand the relationship between consumption and the depletion of natural resources. Therefore, travel companies make claims that ecotourism alleviates some of the environmental and economic damage wrought by industrialized nations. The problem, as argued by some sociologists, is that ecotourism does not usually live up to these claims (Bandy 1996; Weinberg, Bellows, and Ekster 2002).

Nevertheless, some sociologists claim that ecotourism, if effectively managed, *can* make positive contributions to both the environment and local communities (Bandy 1996; Wearing and Wearing 1999; Scheyvens 2000; Weinberg, Bellows, and Ekster 2002; Wood 2002). Effective management means that tourists and travel companies must actively attempt to balance recreational activities with sensitivity to the environment as well as the values of local communities. Further, ecotourism must place environmental and cultural concerns before profits. For example, tourists can enjoy special habitats but also maintain certain distances from endangered wildlife as well as flora and fauna. Also, travel companies can offer classes that help tourists understand how their presence influences local communities.

democracy from the ground up. So that local diner—or barbershop or bar—is more important than it appears to be. It helps maintain social cohesion and links the individual to the community. Where's your third place?



Where's Your Third Place? Whether it's a coffeehouse, a barbershop, or a neighborhood pub, third places are informal public places where people come together regularly for conversation and camaraderie.



DATA WORKSHOP

ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Observing a Hangout

This Data Workshop asks you to investigate the phenomenon of the local hangout using participant observation (see Chapter 3 for a review). It doesn't matter which kind of hangout you choose; it could be a bar, restaurant, gym, park, student union, or bookstore. What's important is to make sure that it's a real hangout, someplace where people linger, that they return to regularly to socialize. Part of your work will be to determine just what constitutes a good hangout. So think a bit about your own habits and those of your friends, and choose what you think is a good hangout to study using participant observation.

Once you've chosen one, make some ethnographic field notes describing both the physical and social setting. What makes this place a good hangout for the people there? You'll also need to distinguish who are the "regulars" and who are not. How do you tell a one-time visitor from a regular? How do people establish themselves as regulars? What kinds of interactions take place at the hangout? Interview a few people you think are regulars. What does the hangout mean to them? How does it function in their everyday life? In what respect is being a regular a part of their identity? In writing up your analysis, include some examples of the particular **idioculture** you find—the customs and values expressed in the place and in the interactions of the people who hang out there.

There are two options for completing the assigned work.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Prepare written fieldnotes that you can refer to during in-class discussions.

idioculture the customs, practices, and values expressed in a particular place by the people who interact there

TABLE 14.1 **Theory in Everyday Life**

Perspective	Approach to Recreation and Leisure	Case Study: Spectator Sports in America
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Social institutions such as recreation and leisure provide for the needs of society and its members and help to maintain social cohesion and unity.	Participation in spectator sports helps to reaffirm social bonds; rooting for a team underscores the value of performance and competition.
CONFLICT THEORY	Social institutions such as recreation and leisure reflect the existing power structures in society and thus create and maintain social inequalities.	Participation in spectator sports legitimizes conflict between groups in society and the belief in winners and losers.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Social institutions such as recreation and leisure are produced when people act together; they play a meaningful role in the everyday lives of members.	Participation in spectator sports provides members with a sense of group affiliation and personal identification.

Discuss your reactions and conclusions with other students in small-group discussions. Listen for any differences or variations in each other's insights.

- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay answering the questions posed above. Use specific excerpts from your fieldnotes to support your analysis and attach them to your paper.

Travel and Tourism

While some people find respite in hangouts close to home, others relax and rejuvenate by seeing the world. The travel and tourism industries (which include airlines, hotels, car-rental agencies, restaurants, theme parks, resorts, and other attractions) are multibillion-dollar businesses and play an important part in the U.S. economy. In 2007, the industries employed 17 million workers and generated $740 billion in expenditures and nearly $104 billion in tax revenues (Forbes Businesswire 2008). Americans spent over $80 billion traveling abroad and within the United States; domestic travelers spent $490 billion. More than 56 million international visitors spent a record-breaking $122 billion on travel- and tourism-related activities in the United States (Reuters 2008).

The impact of tourism is both economic and cultural. We may travel in order to learn to appreciate different cultures, but we may also exoticize or even mistreat other groups as we fit them into our own recreational needs, rather than learning about them on their own terms (Urry 1990, 1992, 2000). Travel and tourism shape not just our individual relations with others but also political and economic relations between nations on a global scale. This chapter's Changing the World box addresses these issues as they pertain to what is known as ecotourism.

Closing Comments

Who would have thought that the things you do for fun might actually be important? The many activities considered part of leisure—travel, entertainment, sports, hobbies—while prevalent features of our everyday lives, play an increasingly significant role in the shape of society. We hope we haven't spoiled their pleasure by asking you to examine their various structures and meanings—you can still enjoy your recreational activities even after you've learned to take a critical, sociological perspective on them!



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **Studying Recreation and Leisure** Recreation and leisure are relative terms, primarily defined in opposition to paid work and other obligatory activities. Almost anything can be recreation as long as someone does it for pleasure. In recent history, an increasingly efficient economy has transformed leisure, such that we have far more leisure time today than before. There have also been three related qualitative shifts. First, many leisure activities have shifted from the public to the private sphere, following the general decline of public life often associated with electronics and communication technology. Second, leisure is increasingly commodified, as people become more likely to purchase rather than make things. Finally, many recreational activities that were once spontaneous and unsupervised are now formally organized.
- **Is Leisure Really the Opposite of Work?** Rather than thinking of leisure as the opposite of work, this chapter argues that work and leisure are complementary activities within a capitalist economic system. All leisure and recreation are made possible through earned wages, and it is often hard to tell exactly where work stops and leisure begins. An increasingly important segment of our economy is based on providing leisure activities. Not only can the same activity constitute both work and leisure for different people, but spectatorship has become an increasingly important form of leisure.
- **The Structure of the Media Industries** Media power has become increasingly concentrated as various corporations merge and conglomerate. Businesses hope that by merging dissimilar media corporations they can increase profits through synergy and cross-marketing. However, this concentration also decreases the diversity of opinions that the media express. In order to address these concerns, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is charged with enforcing antitrust legislation designed to prevent media monopolies. Although

ownership of traditional media has become increasingly concentrated in recent years, technological changes have also given rise to a variety of new types of media, including zines, blogs, and podcasts, all of which can provide greater diversity of opinion and content than commercial media can.

- **Mass Media Consumption: Passive vs. Active Audiences** Despite the general consensus that the media are a powerful social force, their effects on consumers are difficult to measure, and there are a variety of theories about how media exposure affects people. Older theories focused on the magic bullet (or hypodermic needle) model, which assumed that media consumers were passive, uncritical recipients of content. Subsequent theories in the uses and gratifications paradigm recognized that the media had more limited or minimal effects. Reinforcement theory, agenda setting, and the two-step flow model focused on the media's influence on the attitudes and beliefs of audience members. Newer models tend to see audience members as active individuals who each bring different experiences and interpretive strategies to bear on the same media text. Both the encoding/decoding model and the uses and gratifications paradigm stress the audience's active engagement with the media product. Recent technological changes have allowed textual poaching, a particularly active form of engagement in which the audience manipulates the original product, transforming it into a new one.
- **Recreation, Leisure, and Relationships** As our time available for recreation and leisure has increased, our leisurely pastimes have become increasingly important to our relationships. Celebrities and athletes serve as role models, and people with whom we share interests become part of our primary group. Some sociologists worry that the bonds formed through shared recreational interests are insufficient to support civil society, and some have noted that, relative to some countries, America seems to lack the gathering places, or "third place" locations, that nurture community interactions and relationships.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What does "commercialization of leisure" mean? Think of one of your favorite leisure activities and make a list of every aspect of this activity that costs money, either directly or indirectly.
2. Sociologist Richard Sennett argues that modernity has seen a decline in the importance of public life. Technological developments, especially information and media technology, have helped shift recreation and leisure from the public to the private sphere. Which technologies make you more likely to pursue leisure activities alone? Are there technologies that make you more likely to pursue social leisure activities? Which kind of leisure is more common?
3. Sociologists have long associated types of leisure activities with different social classes. Which leisure activities are associated with wealthy elites or with the working class? Which leisure activities, if any, have no class associations?
4. Many sociologists worry that conglomeration and the resulting concentration of media power might adversely affect democracy. How could this happen? What are the consequences for the media consumer when there are fewer sources of information?
5. How powerful are the media in persuading us to buy certain products or hold particular beliefs? Discuss reinforcement theory, agenda setting, and/or the two-step flow model. Which of these theories best explains the influence of the media?
6. Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model assumes that particular ideological messages are loaded into cultural products and that individuals respond to those messages in a variety of ways. Can you think of a cultural product that is decoded in a way that clearly runs counter to the way it was encoded?
7. Describe an example of textual poaching, in which audience members take the original cultural product and manipulate it themselves. This could be something as simple as a T-shirt or as complicated as a short movie. Which theories of media consumption does your example support? Why did someone take the time to create this media product?
8. Celebrities can be very important in our lives even though our "relationships" with celebrities are asymmetrical and media-facilitated. Does this mean they aren't relationships? Are any particular celebrities important to you? What have you done to learn more about them?
9. Are bonds based on shared leisure interests sufficient to constitute a sense of group responsibility? Or are recreational activities too inconsequential to create true group identity? Think about people you know through shared

recreational and leisure pursuits. Are they part of your primary group, or more like members of your "lifestyle enclave"?

10. Some people worry that American society has too few hangouts, or "third place" locations, where people come together regularly for conversation and camaraderie outside work and home. If you regularly visit any location like this, what sorts of things go on there? Have the bonds you formed there been important to other parts of your life?

11. Ecotourism seeks to make tourism as ecofriendly as possible. What other products or services claim environmental friendliness to increase sales?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Bride and Prejudice. 2005. Dir. Gurinder Chadha. Miramax Films. A Bollywood adaptation of the classic Jane Austen novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Some elements translate easily from the book, but the story is also infused with the distinctive cultural traditions of Bollywood.

Columbia Journalism Review (www.cjr.org/tools/owners). This site's guide to major media companies' holdings offers a hands-on understanding of the concentration of media power.

Fine, Gary Alan. 1998. *Morel Tales: The Culture of Mushrooming*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. A humorous, in-depth description of three years spent hunting mushrooms with dedicated amateurs and trained professionals. Fine describes and analyzes the subculture of mushroom hunting, revealing the ways that a shared recreational interest can create community.

Gamson, Joshua. 1998. *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A discussion of the way that "tabloid television" helps increase the exposure of groups whose sexual orientation or gender identity makes them outsiders in American culture.

Guralnick, Peter. 1999. *Feel Like Going Home: Portraits in Blues and Rock 'n' Roll*. Boston: Back Bay Books. Describes the history of the commercialization of music in the United States and the effect this change in the industry had on musicians, as they were forced to go out on the road and play for strangers.

Jenkins, Henry, and Justine Cassell. 2000. *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. An exploration of the role of gender in computer games—particularly the development of video games for girls. The authors raise the concern that marketing computer games primarily to boys widens the technology gap between the genders. However, attempts to make video games "for girls" risk reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Johnson, Steven. 2005. *Everything Bad Is Good for You*. New York: Riverhead Books. An examination of pop culture arguing that contemporary TV shows, video games, and other electronic media give the mind a better workout than critics typically acknowledge and that the most criticized elements of today's media are actually more complex—and better for us—than the sitcoms and movies of the past.

Metallica: Some Kind of Monster. 2005. Dir. Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky. Paramount Pictures. A behind-the-scenes look at the real work that underlies the art and the business of rock and roll, and the repetitive daily grind of life on tour.

Miller, Mark Crispin. January 7, 2002. "What's Wrong with This Picture?" *The Nation* (www.thenation.com/special/bigten.html). Miller profiles the 10 conglomerations that control the vast majority of media in the United States and outlines the consequences of this state of affairs. Pay special attention to the chart he provides, showing the synergistic links between elements of each corporation.

The Merchants of Cool. 2001. Dir. Barak Goodman. PBS. A documentary that examines the ways products are marketed to teenagers and investigates the impact of conglomeration and cross-marketing. The whole documentary is available online (www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool).

Visit the place where Elvis Presley lived: Graceland. Elvis Presley's estate in suburban Memphis, Tennessee, is perhaps the ultimate location for observing fan culture and celebrity worship.

PART V
Creating Social Change and Envisioning the Future



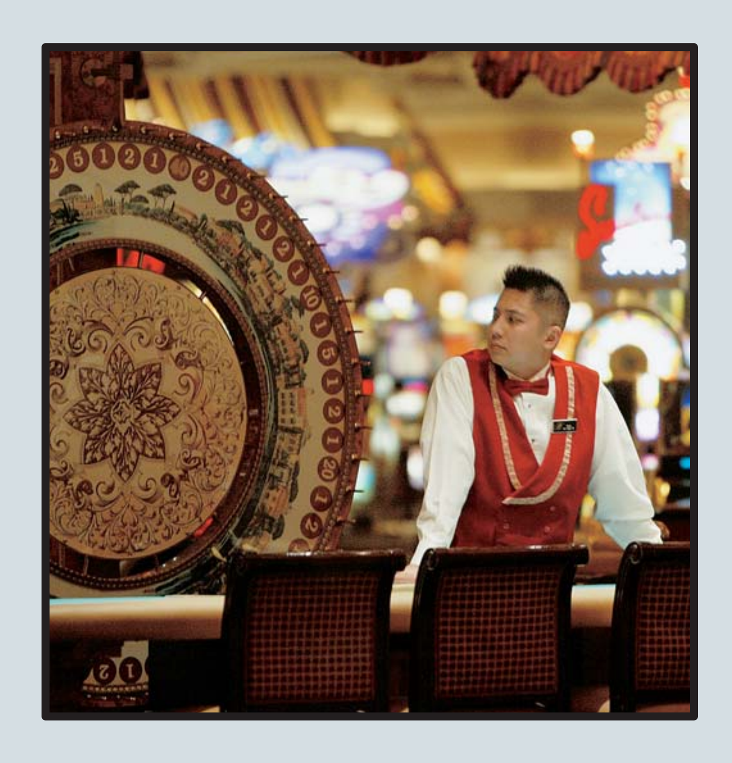
Las Vegas—Sin City, Entertainment Capital of the World, home of glitz, glitter, and gambling. Fantasy mecca, international tourist destination where fortunes and marriages are made and broken. Populated by showgirls, gangsters, high-rollers, and Elvis impersonators. This is the "Hollywood Vegas" according to Mark Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins, and David R. Dickens. Their book, *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City* (1999), chronicles the development of Las Vegas from its days as a pit stop for Spanish explorers in the early 1800s to the neon marvel it has become.

Gottdiener, Collins, and Dickens analyze the Hollywood Vegas, but they argue that there is another Las Vegas as well, where regular people live, work, and go to school, the supermarket, and the movies. What is the real Las Vegas like? It's big, it's growing fast, and its demographic, economic, and cultural trends represent the social changes taking place in many cities across the country—even those without pulsating neon or posh casinos.

The 2000 Census confirmed that Las Vegas was the fastest growing metropolitan area in the United States—its population increased 83 percent during the 1990s and continued to grow into the twenty-first century, with the Clark County Metro Area (of which Las Vegas is a part) hitting the 2 million mark in 2007. While Las Vegas's population boom started to taper off in 2008, the county population remains at just about 2 million (Access Clark County 2009). It will be interesting to see whether the 2010 census shows a population decline in this once burgeoning locale.

People flocked to Las Vegas because of its booming employment and housing market, and they came from all over the country and the world. A large proportion of newcomers to Las Vegas were former residents of California, seeking refuge from skyrocketing housing prices and a tight job market. Another major segment of the Las Vegas population boom was senior citizens, who now make up 25 percent of the populace. Retirees are valued consumers who spend money on new homes and other items when they arrive in the city; however, as they age, they may create a strain on local health-care resources. Another major population segment is Hispanic Americans, who make up almost 25 percent of Las Vegas's population. They are the fastest growing ethnic group in southern Nevada, and they, too, are valued consumers, courted by advertisers in both English- and Spanish-language media. In addition, the area has a growing population of undocumented Hispanic immigrants, who work at casinos, hotels, and resorts and whose labor supports the region's biggest industry, tourism.

In addition to these demographic trends, Las Vegas is also an economic trendsetter, for better or worse. Its employment rates are consistently high because of the large number



of service jobs in the casino, resort, and tourist industries, but these jobs generally offer low pay and few benefits. There is also other work to do in Las Vegas. Major industries include construction and real estate sales (though these industries have been hit hard by the recent recession), banking, and other financial services, often related to the casino industry (p. 112). As the economy diversifies, the population grows—and as the population grows, more services and other work become necessary. Cards must be dealt, meals must be cooked, hotel rooms must be cleaned, children must be taught, cars must be repaired, and houses must be built, sold, and financed. However, if a population begins to decline, the market for all those goods and services diminishes, and jobs of all sorts become harder to find.

Las Vegas's housing boom began in the 1970s with the advent of master-planned communities. These residential developments, often built around golf courses, were move-in-ready when the economy began growing and diversifying in the 1980s, and more middle-class families began moving into the city. Master-planned suburbs continue to sprout in and around Las Vegas, filling Clark County with people and all the things they use, like houses, schools, stores, roads, and cars. Recently, though, this boom has gone bust, with Las Vegas holding one of the highest real estate foreclosure rates in the country (*International Business Times* 2008). Whatever takes place in the larger U. S. real estate market happens even more spectacularly in Las Vegas.

Environmental issues are important to life in the real Las Vegas, which is located in a desert ecosystem where water is scarce and rainfall is infrequent. Hundreds of thousands of

people live in this ecosystem, in sprawling suburban housing developments. Lawns, pools, and golf courses require billions of gallons of water that the immediate environment does not provide, yet growth continues. Las Vegas competes with several other arid states, including California, for water resources. Water from the Colorado River is pumped in at great expense from Lake Mead to fill pools and water lawns, as well as for household use. Lake Mead is also the destination for all of Las Vegas's out-going effluent—treated sewage and runoff full of lawn chemicals (p. 248). These environmental toxins cycle back into the drinking water consumed by the area's residents.

Water isn't the only environmental issue that Las Vegas faces. Atomic test sites from the 1950s and 60s, located in the Mojave Desert, were once in the middle of nowhere—but suburban sprawl continues to draw closer to these areas. The same is true of a number of desert chemical plants in areas that are also being encroached upon by residential development. Recently, environmental activists have successfully prohibited nuclear waste transport and dumping in the Las Vegas area.

A fluctuating population; an economy dominated by service industry work; a natural environment strained to its limits by desert sprawl—this is the real Las Vegas. Add the glittery, neon-lit Hollywood fantasy town, and you have a vanguard city for the twenty-first century. Economic, environmental, and demographic trends that already appear in Las Vegas—including the booms and busts of the larger economy—will become increasingly visible in other U.S. cities.

Cultural and social changes occurring in Las Vegas may also be visible where you live—including the legalization of gambling. While Las Vegas was once the center of a gambling industry dominated by organized crime, legal casinos are now operated all over the country by groups of all sorts, including state governments and Native American tribes. Gambling boats float on many Midwestern lakes and rivers, and resort casinos continue to spring up on Indian reservations in almost half the U.S. states.

Las Vegas is also the site of unusually powerful labor unions which represent many of the service employees—cooks, waiters, musicians, hotel employees—whose work keeps the city running. At a time when union membership is down in the rest of the country, Las Vegas is a strong union city—ironically located in Nevada, a right-to-work state. Union laborers tend to have higher wages and benefits than nonunion workers because of the power of collective bargaining. The resurgence of union membership in Las Vegas's service industries may inspire workers in other cities with service- and tourism-dominated economies.

Gottdiener and his coauthors argue that "in many ways Las Vegas represents, though often in exaggerated form, several important trends in contemporary American society as a whole" (p. xi). In Part V, we will examine many of those trends from a sociological perspective as part of our focus on social change. In Chapter 15, we will examine a variety of demographic, economic, and environmental trends such as suburbanization, migration, and aging. And we will consider processes of cultural and social change, such as activism by labor unions and environmentalists, in Chapter 16. As you read these chapters, think about your own city or town and the trends you have observed close to home. Also, think about the changes you would like to see in your surroundings; a sociological perspective can help you strategize to make those changes happen. In any case, keep an eye on Las Vegas for changes yet to come—because, as Gottdiener, Collins, and Dickens demonstrate, what happens in Vegas doesn't necessarily stay in Vegas!





CHAPTER 15

City and Country

The Social World and the Natural World

Chris McCandless was the picture of success. The son of upper-middle-class professionals in Washington, D.C., he had just graduated from Emory University in Atlanta and was headed for law school. Nonetheless he felt constrained and even betrayed by a society that perpetuated poverty and inequality and often seemed to care so little for its individual members. He wanted to experience the personal freedom of being untethered by obligations to family, school, and work—even though that meant letting go of the emotional and material security they provide.

In the summer of 1990, Chris headed for the wilderness, which he saw as pure and untainted while he saw society as corrupt and damaged. Chris moved in and out of the social world during the next two years; he lived in the wilderness successfully for long stretches of time but always had to come back to civilization for supplies, to earn a little money, and to make some human connections. After spending months alone in the deserts of the Southwest, he arrived in Bullhead City, Arizona, and took a job at McDonald's. He was leather-skinned and malnourished, had no money or belongings, and had lost his car in a flash flood—but he was still alive, and after a brief stint in what he considered the most sinister of all social institutions (the fast-food industry) he disappeared back into nature again, this time headed to the great unspoiled expanses of Alaska.

Chris did a lot of reading in preparation for his journey, and he seemed able to endure the physical and emotional hardships of being alone in the wilderness for months at a time. His journal entries reveal that he often felt exhilarated and truly believed that his was the superior way of life. But Chris's story did not end happily. Two years after he left Atlanta, his body was found on the Alaskan tundra many miles outside Fairbanks by a group of moose hunters. In his book *Into the Wild*, John Krakauer reconstructed Chris's journey through diaries and interviews. Krakauer determined that while living on the tundra for four months alone, Chris had inadvertently eaten something that may have poisoned him. Realizing how sick he was, he began to yearn for the saving presence of other humans—for both assistance and companionship.

SocIndex

Then and Now

1900: Total number of passenger automobiles in existence worldwide: 4,192

2008: Total number of passenger automobiles in existence worldwide: 600,000,000 (approximate)

Here and There

United States: Number of passenger automobiles per 100 people (2008): 765

Ethiopia: Number of passenger automobiles per 100 people (2008): 129

This and That

Total number of passenger automobiles sold in the United States in 2007: 15,922,200

Number of passenger automobiles sold in the United States in 2007 that were electric hybrids: 350,300

At the very end, his journal entries reveal a desire to return to the social world and a recognition of the protection society offers from the rigors of nature. Chris did not get to reenter society with his newfound insight, but perhaps we can learn more about our own relationship to both the natural and the social worlds from his story.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

This chapter covers three big and deeply connected topics in sociology: population, urbanization, and the environment. To this point, we have focused mostly on society, on people and their effect on each other. But humans live in a natural as well as a social world, and their environment is another key factor in their lives. They are affected by and have a profound effect on the planet earth. The number of humans who live on the planet has more than tripled in just the last 50 years, from 2 billion to over 6 billion. Population studies show that an ever greater portion of people are settling into large, sprawling cities—a trend called urbanization. Growing populations and increased urbanization create new demands and pressures on the global environment as more natural resources are consumed and more pollution and waste are produced, and this has a profound effect on the earth and its inhabitants.

Population

If we want to understand the relationship between the social world and the natural world, we must examine human population. The next sections look at how sociologists study population and its related issues. To paraphrase sociologist Samuel Preston, the study of population has something for everyone: the confrontations of nature and civilization; the dramas of sex and death, politics and war; and the tensions between self-interest and altruism.

demography study of the size, composition, distribution, and changes in human population

fertility rate a measure of population growth through reproduction; often expressed as the average number of births per 1,000 people in the total population or the average number of children a woman would be expected to have

mortality rate a measure of the decrease in population due to deaths; often expressed as the number of deaths expected per 1,000 people per year in a particular population

infant mortality average number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births in a particular population

Demography

Demography is the study of the size, composition, distribution, and changes in human population. Sociologists and others who study population are called demographers. Demography is essentially a macro-level, quantitative approach to society, but it is more than just simply counting heads. Population dynamics are influenced not only by biological factors such as births and deaths but also by sociological factors such as cultural values, religious beliefs, and political and economic systems. People are not just animals who reproduce by instinct, but are subject to structural constraints as well as individual agency, all of which affect their behavior and ultimately the world in which they live.

The United States government has long been interested in keeping track of those residing within its geographic boundaries. The U.S. Census Bureau, a part of the Department of Commerce, conducts regular studies of the population, going back to the first such attempt in 1790. Each new decade, census takers try to contact every person living in the country. Surveys, either short or long form, are sent to every household to gather a range of demographic information from the size and age of family members to their gender, education level, income, and ethnic background. Other countries are less systematic at gathering data, so many statistics that refer to global population are necessarily based on scientific estimates.

Three basic demographic variables are crucial to understanding population dynamics. The first is **fertility rate**—the average number of births per 1,000 people in the total population. The total fertility rate is the average number of children a woman would be expected to have during her childbearing years. In 2008 the total fertility rate in the United States was approximately 2.10. Fertility rates vary across the globe, with some of the highest rates in sub-Saharan Africa, with Niger at 7.29, and some of the lowest in Eastern Europe, with the Ukraine at 1.25.

The next demographic variable is **mortality rate** (or death rate)—the number of deaths that can be expected per 1,000 people per year. This statistic is usually modified by other factors, so the mortality rate within a particular country varies within different age, sex, ethnic, and regional groups. A related concept is **infant mortality** rate, or the average number of deaths per 1,000 live births. In 2008 the U.S. death rate was approximately 8.27 and the infant mortality rate was 6.30. Mortality and infant mortality rates vary across the globe, some of the highest being in Africa,

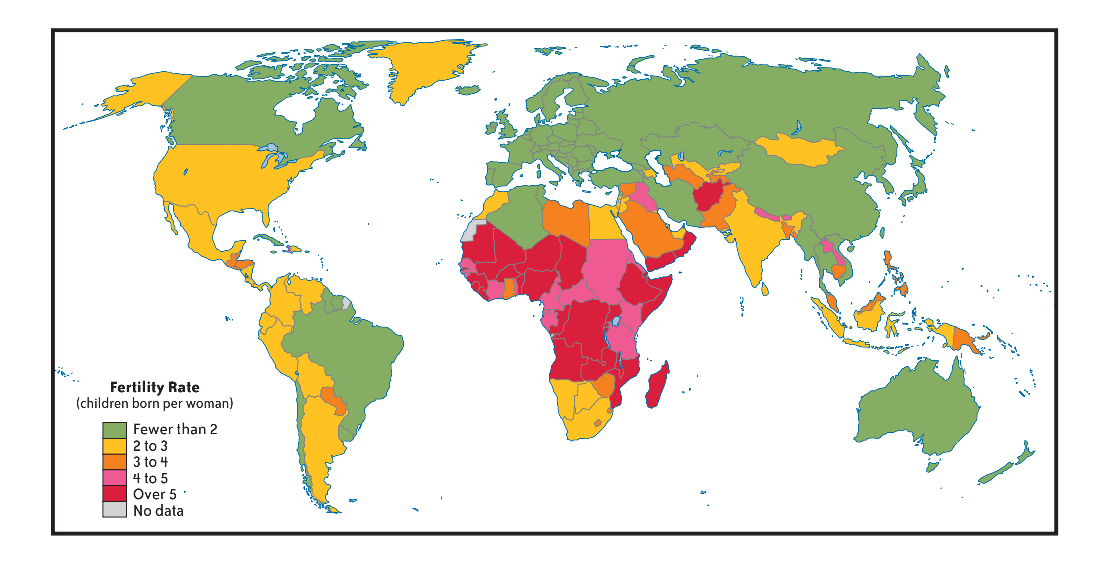


FIGURE 15.1 Global Fertility Rates, 2008 Fertility rates are higher in sub-Saharan Africa and lower in Europe and the Americas.

SOURCE: Data from the CIA World Factbook 2008

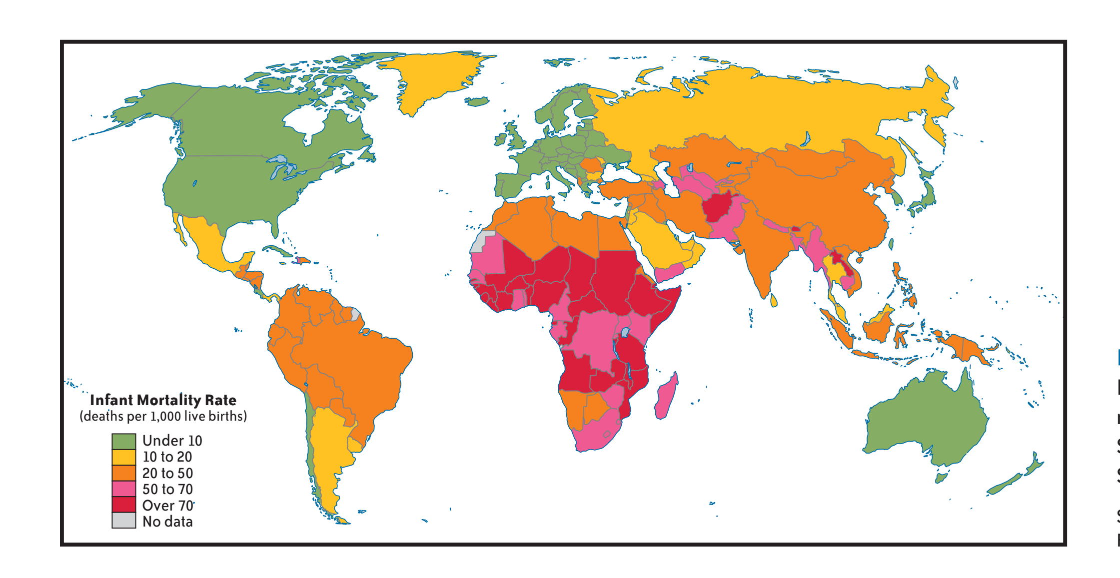


FIGURE 15.2 Global Infant Mortality Rates, 2008 Infant mortality is highest in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and some South American countries.

SOURCE: Data from the CIA World Factbook 2008

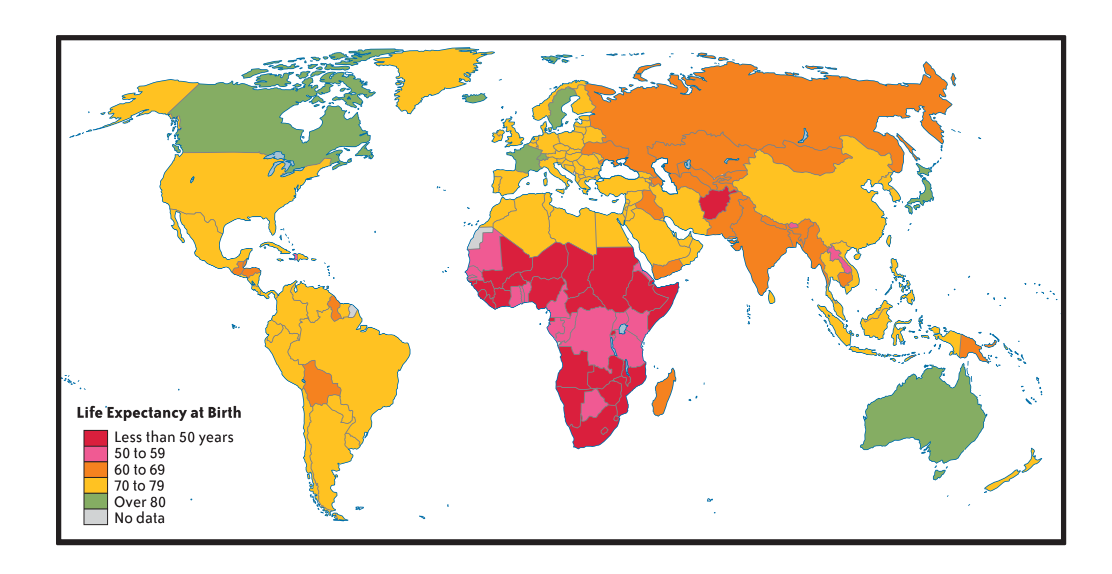


FIGURE 15.3 Global Life Expectancy, 2008 Several countries, including Australia, Canada, France, Iceland, Japan, Sweden, and Switzerland, have life expectancies higher than that of the United States.

SOURCE: Data from the CIA World Factbook 2008

with a death rate of 30.83 in Swaziland and infant mortality rate of 182.31 in Angola. Some of the lowest mortality rates are found in wealthier Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia with 2.47, and some of the lowest infant mortality rates are found in Asian countries such as Singapore with 2.30.

Another related concept is **life expectancy**, or the average age to which a person can expect to live. Here too other factors are involved, so life expectancy of people within a particular country varies by sex, ethnicity, and social class. In general, life expectancy rose dramatically in the twentieth century. In 2008, life expectancy in the United States on average was approximately 78.14 years of age; the average for men was 75.29, while for women it was 81.13. Life expectancy also varies greatly across the globe, with some of the highest averages in wealthier nations like Australia at over 80, and some of the lowest in African countries like Swaziland at approximately 32 years—in large part because of the AIDS epidemic.

The last demographic variable that we will consider is **migration**—the movement of people from one geographic area to another for the purposes of resettling. Migrations have occurred throughout human history and have played an important part in populating the planet. As a demographic variable, migration neither adds to nor subtracts from the total number of people on the planet; it simply refers to their relocation from place to place. Related concepts are **immigration** and **emigration**. Immigrants are those people coming into a country or region to which they are not native. Emigrants are those departing from a country or region with the intention of settling permanently elsewhere. **Internal migration** refers to patterns within a country, where the movement is generally from rural to urban areas. The **net migration** for any country is the difference between the number of persons entering and leaving a country during the year per 1,000 persons. In 2008 the net migration for the United States was 3.05, which means that after adjusting for the people who emigrated, there was a total of 3.05 persons per 1,000 who immigrated. In general, worldwide migration patterns show that people are moving from least industrialized to most industrialized countries. There are often other economic or political reasons for migration, with refugees pouring in and out of some countries. Countries with the highest net migration rates include Afghanistan and Singapore, while those with the lowest rates include Greenland and American Samoa.

life expectancy average age to which people in a particular population live

migration movement of people from one geographic area to another for the purposes of resettling

immigration entering one country from another to take up permanent residence

emigration leaving one country to live permanently in another

internal migration movement of population within a country

net migration net effect of immigration and emigration on an area's population in a given time period, expressed as an increase or decrease

The study of population dynamics involves the interplay among the three sources of population change: fertility, mortality, and migration. These variables are used to construct current population models and future projections. We can apply demographic variables to the global population or to a population within a particular region or country.

If we focus on the United States, we could track several interesting population trends. According to the Census Bureau, between 2000 and 2030 the net population change will be most evident in three states—California, Texas, and Florida. They will account for nearly 46 percent of the nation's population growth. Projected immigration during that period will be highest in California (8.7 million), New York (3.8 million), and Florida (1.8 million). The fastest growing states will be Nevada with a 114.3 percent increase in population, followed by Arizona at 108.8 percent and Florida with 79.5 percent. A few states will even see shrinking populations; the District of Columbia will decrease by 24.2 percent, North Dakota by 5.5 percent, and West Virginia by 4.9 percent. Some of this change will be internal migration among the states, with people moving to the "sunbelt" states in the South and West from "rustbelt" states in the North and East (U.S. Census Bureau 2005d).

Theories on Population Growth

Concerns about population growth first emerged in the eighteenth century during the Industrial Revolution. Many demographic variables at that time contributed to rapid growth in the newly burgeoning urban areas of Europe. Mechanization, which increased agricultural production, and the introduction of a hearty new staple from South America—the potato—made available enough food for people to sustain themselves and support larger families. Other technological and scientific advances helped to decrease infant mortality rates while increasing fertility and extending life expectancy. As a result, the first real population boom in human history occurred.

Thomas Malthus, a British clergy member turned political economist, was one of the first scholars to sound the alarm on overpopulation. Although he lived at a time when people believed in technology and progress, the promise of prosperity and abundance, and the perfectibility of human society, he himself was less than optimistic about the future. Based on his observation of the world around him, Malthus wrote a book in 1789 called *Essay on the Principle of Population*,

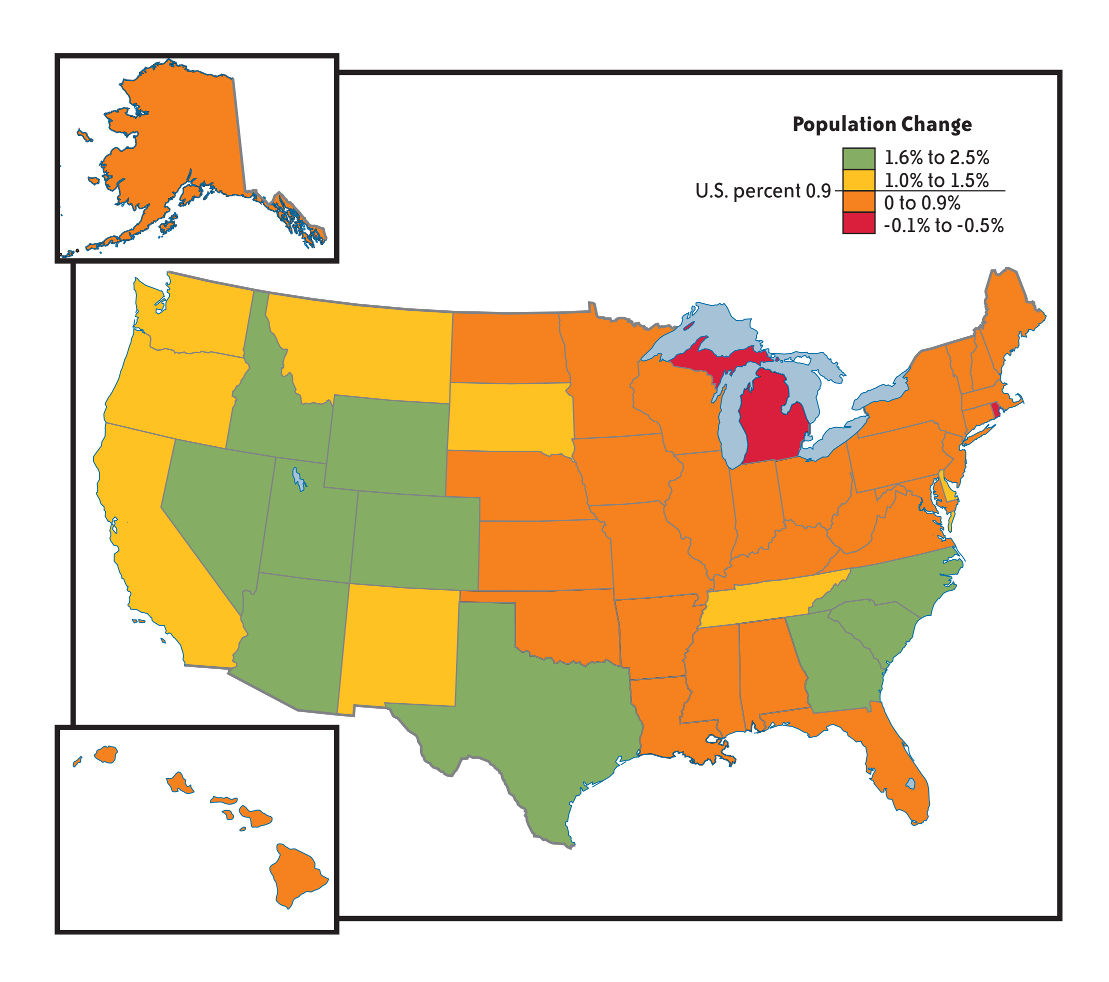


FIGURE 15.4 Population Change in the United States, 2007–8 The populations of Midwest and East Coast states are holding steady or decreasing, while the populations of Inter-Mountain West, Pacific Northwest, and some Southern states are growing.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau 2008*l*

in which his basic premise, the **Malthusian theorem,** stated that the population would expand at a much faster rate than agriculture; inevitably at some future point, people would far outnumber the available land and food sources. If population increases surpass the ability of the earth to provide a basic level of subsistence, then massive suffering will follow. His theory has two simple principles: that population growth is exponential or geometric (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 . . .), whereas food production is additive or arithmetic (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 . . .).

According to his calculations, society was headed for disaster, or what is called the **Malthusian trap**. To avoid such a catastrophe, Malthus made several rather radical policy recommendations. He may have been the first to propose that humans should collectively limit their propagation to save themselves and preserve their environments. He urged "moral restraint" in sexual reproduction to curtail overpopulation. If human beings were unable to restrain themselves (by postponing marriage or practicing abstinence), nature would exert "positive checks" on population growth through famine, war, and disease (Malthus 1997 [1798; 1803]). Malthus also advocated state assistance to the lower classes so they could more readily achieve a middle-class lifestyle supported by decent wages and benefits and adopt the values associated with later marriage and smaller families (New School 2004).

Malthus's ideas were not always popular, though they were influential and widely read. Charles Darwin noted that Malthusian theory was an important influence on his own theory of evolution and natural selection. Malthus also influenced whole new generations of social thinkers, not just demographers but others as well, and their respective ideas on population growth.

More than 200 years later, some people, the **Neo-Malthusians**, or New Malthusians, essentially still agree with him. Among the notable modern voices looking at the problem of overpopulation are William Catton (1980), Paul and Ann Ehrlich (1990), and

Malthusian theorem the theory that exponential population growth will outpace arithmetic growth in food production and other resources

Malthusian trap Malthus's prediction that a rapidly increasing population will overuse natural resources, leading inevitably to a major public health disaster

Neo-Malthusians contemporary researchers who worry about the rapid pace of population growth and believe that Malthus's basic prediction could be true

Garrett Hardin (1993). They worry about the rapid pace of population growth and believe that Malthus's basic prediction could be true. In some respects, they claim, the problem has even gotten worse. There are a lot more people on the planet in the twenty-first century, so their continued reproduction expands even more quickly than in Malthus's time. And with continued technological advancements—such as wars that use "surgical strikes," modern standards of sanitation, and the eradication of many diseases—people are living much longer than before. When Malthus was alive there were approximately 1 billion people on the planet; it was the first time in recorded history that the population reached that number. The time required for that number to double and for each additional billion to be added has continued to shorten (Figure 15.5a). Today there are over 6 billion people on the planet—and counting. A quick look at Figure 15.5b showing how many people are added to the planet each second, minute, hour, day, week, month, and year is mind-boggling (Cohen 1995).

The New Malthusians also point to several sociological factors that influence the reproductive lives of many and promote large families. Religion still plays a role in many societies, with the Old Testament commanding, "Go forth and multiply." The Catholic Church still forbids members to practice any birth control besides the rhythm method, even though 78 percent of American Catholics said the church should allow them to use some form of artificial contraception (CNN 2005). In many poorer nations, more children mean more financial support for the family. They work various jobs in their youth to help sustain the household, and for parents, children may be the only source of support they have in old age. Some governments encourage the expansion of their population base and promote the addition of new citizens who can become taxpayers or soldiers. They may even provide incentives to parents, such as tax deductions for each child. Last, cultural influences, from "family values" to "machismo," sometimes confer more prestige on those with children; women gain status in the valued role of mother, while men gain status for their perceived virility.

Anti-Malthusians contemporary researchers who believe the population boom Malthus witnessed was a temporary, historically specific phenomenon and worry instead that the worldwide population may shrink in the future

demographic free fall decrease in fertility rates among populations that have industrialized their economies as children become an economic liability rather than an asset

demographic transition a theory suggesting the possible transition over time from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates, resulting in a stabilized population

family planning contraception, or any method of controlling family size and the birth of children

growth rate expression of changes in population size over time figured by subtracting the number of deaths from the number of births, then adding the net migration

natural increase change in population size that results from births and deaths; linked to a country's progress toward demographic transition

At the same time, contrary arguments are proposed by the **Anti-Malthusians**. Economists such as Julian Simon (1996, 2000) and demographers such as William Peterson (2003) believe that Malthus reached faulty conclusions and that he couldn't have envisioned the many modern developments that would impact population dynamics. In fact, the Anti-Malthusians worry more about the population shrinking and the possibility of a **demographic free fall** than they do about it growing indefinitely. They don't see that happening immediately, but they forecast a very different future when the pattern of **demographic transition**, now occurring in many industrialized nations, spreads to the rest of the developing world.

The Anti-Malthusians believe that when people have a better standard of living they also prefer smaller families, as children become more of an economic liability than an asset. Better education and easier access to health care bring more reproductive choices such as methods of **family planning**. Governments in some countries are adopting policies that discourage large families. Further, the Anti-Malthusians claim that technological advancements have enabled humans to produce much larger quantities of food than ever before, thus providing for the nutritional needs of more of the world's population.

So who is right? Will the world population eventually stabilize, or will it continue to spiral out of control? We may not know the answer to those questions for many years, so in the meantime we continue to speculate. The populations of some countries continue to grow rapidly, while others remain stable or begin to decline. The **growth rate** is the number of births minus deaths plus net migration of a population, expressed as a percentage change from the beginning of the time period measured, often resulting in what is referred to as a **natural increase**. The growth rate in the United States in 2008 was 0.89 percent. It was highest in African countries such as Liberia at 4.84 percent and Burundi at 3.59 percent and lowest in Pacific Islands such as Niue at –0.03 percent and Cook Island at –1.20 percent.

What about the other elements in Malthus's theorem? Food production has grown remarkably since Malthus's time. In particular, the "Green Revolution" that began in Mexico in 1948 and spread to India and other less developed nations in the 1960s caused an explosion in food production. This was partly because of better agricultural mechanization as well as newly engineered seeds, pesticides, and artificial fertilizers. Was this a unique increase, or can it be


World Population Growth over 2,000 Years

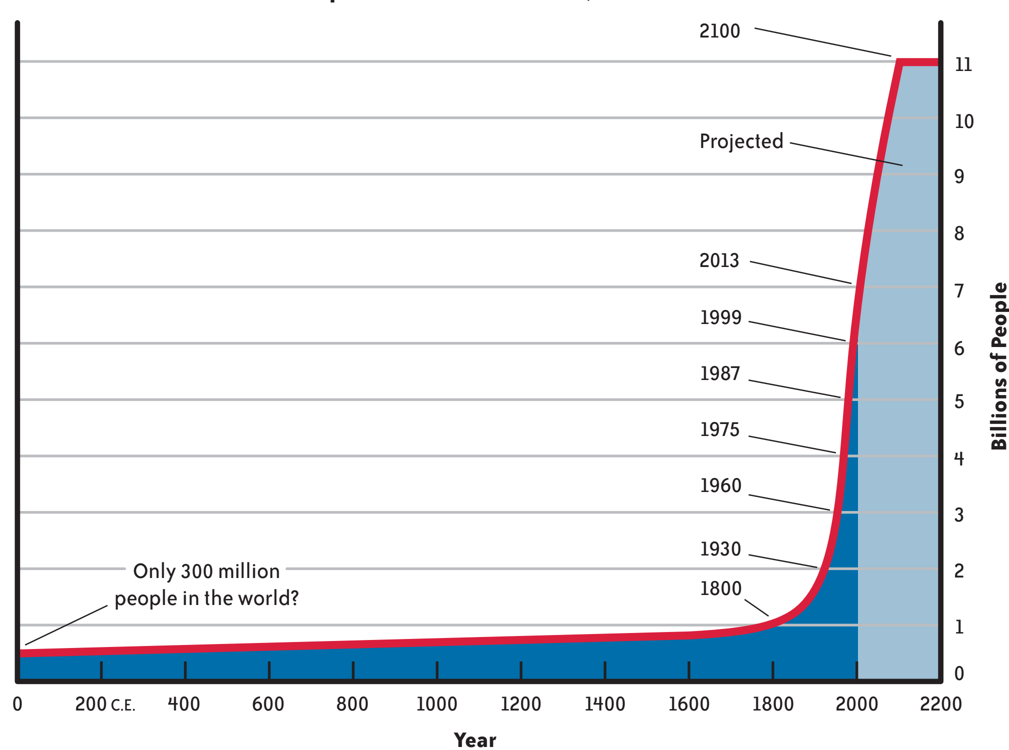


FIGURE 15.5a World Population Growth over 2,000 Years The world's population grew slowly for most of human history, then began to increase rapidly in the nineteenth century. With the world population now increasing by almost 3 people per second, as the Population Clock on the next page shows, it could reach 11 billion by 2100.

SOURCE: Population Reference Bureau 2008

expected again in the future? The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that world agriculture will grow at a slower pace, from an annual 2.1 percent over the last two decades to 1.6 percent from 2005 to 2015 and 1.3 percent from 2015 to 2030. Growth in agriculture will continue to surpass world population growth, estimated to be 1.2 percent from 2005 to 2015 and 0.8 percent from 2015 to 2030.

Nonetheless, hunger remains widespread, not only in foreign countries but also in the United States. Worldwide, an estimated 1 billion people suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition—a lack of adequate food plus other factors such as insufficient protein and nutrients, poor feeding habits, and unsafe water and sanitation. Some 10 million people die every year from hunger or hunger-related causes; three-fourths of them are children under the age of five (the United Nations World Food Programme 2007). In the United States, every day 11 percent of households—over 36 million people—experience hunger or food insecurity, that is, the limited or uncertain ability to acquire adequate and safe foods (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2007).

Other factors must also be considered in projecting the future of population impacts. Science constantly brings technological advancements that enhance health and prolong life, but new and deadly diseases such as AIDS claim an ever greater death toll in nations too poor to afford the medicines to treat these diseases. As the world's current occupants, we have to live now with the consequences of our choices. Many policy and advocacy groups concerned with population matters have been established in the last few decades, including Zero Population Growth, World Overpopulation Awareness, the Population Institute, and the Population Reference Bureau. To find out more, visit their websites listed at the end of the chapter.

Urbanization

The dynamics of population growth (and sometimes shrinkage) over human history have been accompanied by the development of larger cities in which more people are now living. Cities, however, are not a modern development. They have been in existence for thousands of years. We find evidence of ancient cities in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and South America. By comparison to today's standards, these early cities would be considered quite small. They generally had just several thousand residents and were typically agricultural centers along major trade routes. Some much larger cities, however, had hundreds of thousands of residents, such as the Mediterranean cities of Athens and Rome. One reason cities were able to thrive was the advances in agriculture that allowed surpluses of food to be readily available to support a population that was not directly involved in its production.

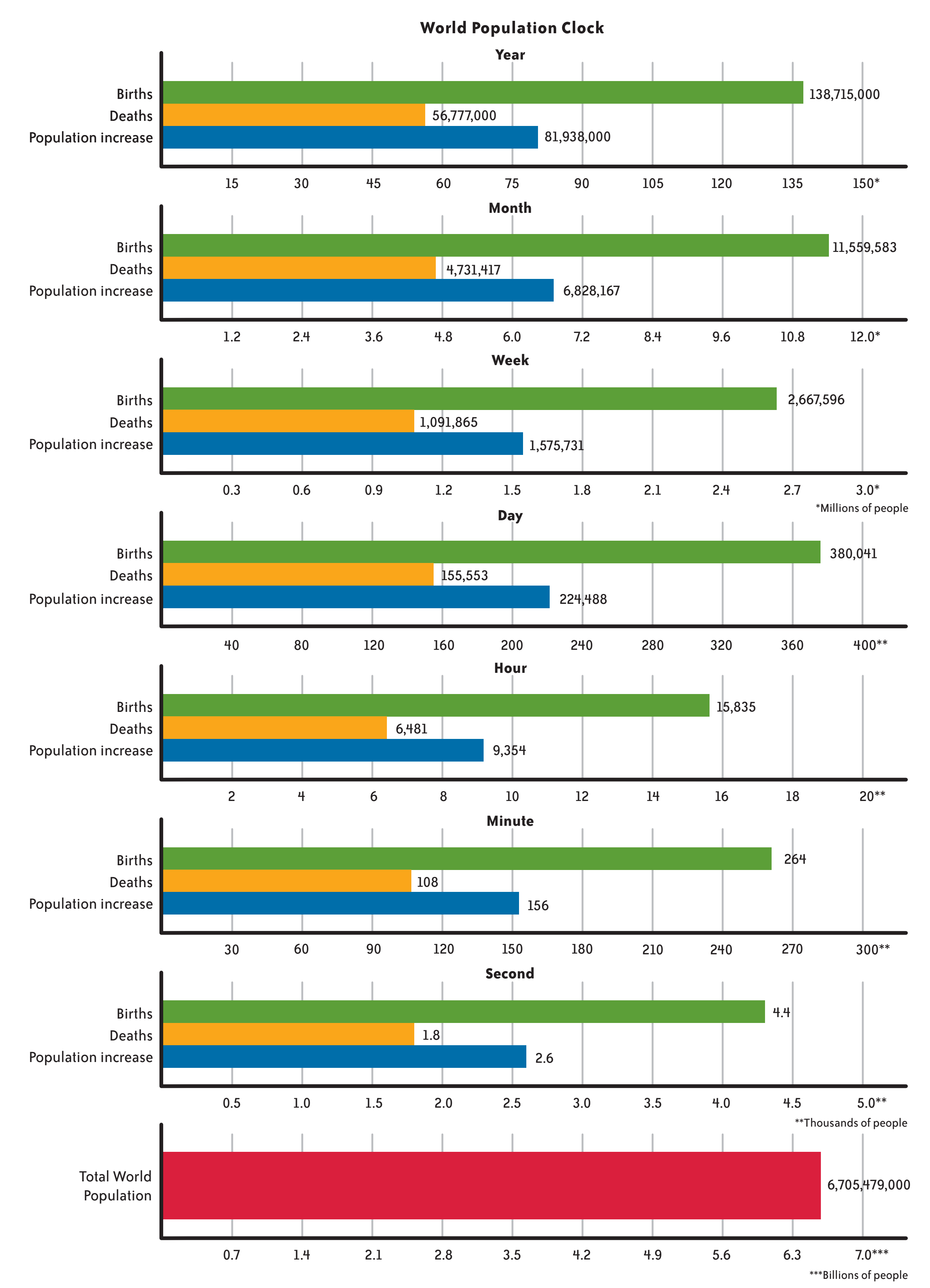


FIGURE 15.5b **World Population Clock**

SOURCE: Population Reference Bureau 2008

People were thus freed to engage in other activities necessary for the functioning of the city and its residents.

Cities were not the prevalent residential areas until well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Until then, the vast majority of people worldwide lived in **rural** or country areas. The wide-scale development of cities, or **urban** areas, was made possible by the significant social, economic, and political changes accompanying the Industrial Revolution, when masses of people were drawn into cities to find housing and the manufacturing jobs they needed to earn a living. Fewer families were involved in farming, as large companies, or agribusiness, began to emerge. Cities were populated not only by migrants from rural areas but also by immigrants from other countries, seeking opportunity and a better way of life. Industrialization provided the jobs and the means of communication and transportation to build the burgeoning city infrastructure that could support growing numbers of residents. This process in which growing numbers of people move from rural to urban areas is called **urbanization**.

In the early 1800s, only about 3 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas and only one city had a population greater than 1 million people: Peking, China (now called Beijing). In the early 1900s, almost 14 percent lived in urban areas, and another dozen or so cities around the world (including New York, London, Paris, Moscow, and Tokyo) had 1 million or more residents. In the early 2000s, more than 50 percent of the world's population were living in urban areas, and we now have to count as large cities those with 5 million people or more; there are more than 60 of these in the world (United Nations 2006).

A similar pattern can be seen in the United States. In the early 1800s, just 6 percent of the population lived in urban areas, whereas 94 percent lived in rural areas. In the early 1900s, the split was 40 percent urban and 60 percent in rural. In the early 2000s, 79 percent were urban and 21 percent were rural. As of 2007, nine American cities had populations over 1 million; the largest among them, New York, has over 8 million (U.S. Census Bureau 2007d).

rural relating to sparsely settled areas; in the United States, any county with a population density between 10 and 59.9 people per square mile

urban relating to cities; typically describes densely populated areas

urbanization movement of increasing numbers of people from rural areas to cities

metropolis an urban area with a large population, usually 500,000 to 1,000,000 people

Features of Urbanization

The term *city* is currently used to refer to an urban settlement with a large population, usually at least 50,000 to 100,000 people. Although a few states, including North Dakota, West Virginia, and Vermont, have no cities with populations of 100,000 people or more, California has 46 cities with more than 100,000 people, followed by Texas with 19 and Florida with 12. Urban demographers use the word **metropolis** to refer to an urban area with an even larger population—usually at least 500,000 people—that typically serves as the economic, political, and cultural center for a region. The

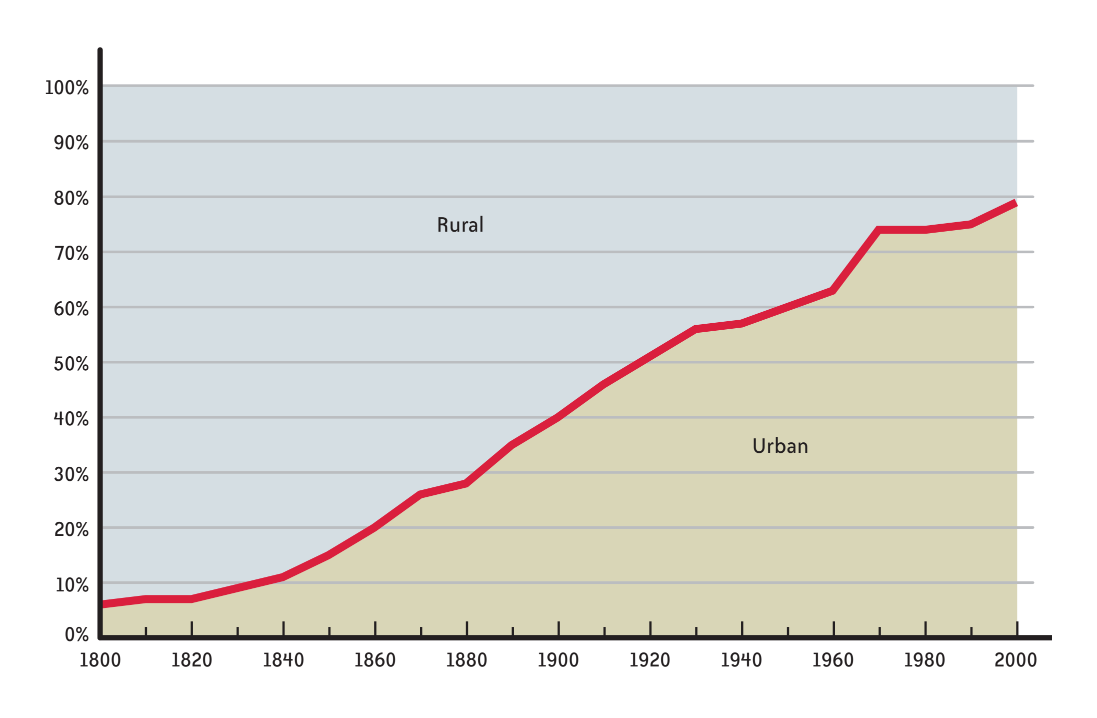


FIGURE 15.6 Rural/Urban Makeup of the U.S. Population, 1800–2000
As the U.S. population grew, so did the proportion of urban dwellers compared to rural inhabitants.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau 1993 and 2000b

Global Perspective

The Asian Brown Cloud: Pollution in China and India

China and India are the two most populated countries in the world, with over a billion residents in each. In comparison, the United States, the third most populated country, has 301 million residents. According to calculations from the United Nations, no other country besides China and India will reach a population size of 1 billion. Despite the fact that the United States is the third most populated country, making up only 5 percent of the world's total population, it also consumes approximately 25 percent of its resources—in other words, we're currently the pigs of the planet. Unfortunately, though, as China and India develop into completely industrialized countries, they are following in the resource-hogging footsteps of the United States.

The "Asian Brown Cloud" is a name given to the layer of pollution that hangs over China, India, and parts of Southwest Asia. In satellite photos, the Asian Brown Cloud appears as a giant brown stain over this part of the world during the months of January through March. To the residents of China and India, the Asian Brown Cloud appears as a haze of air pollution hovering over their countries. Environmental scientists maintain that the Asian Brown Cloud consists of airborne pollutants from car and factory combustion and biomass burning that collect when there are no rains to wash it away. This atmospheric pollution has both immediate and long-term impacts on the citizens of Asia. Mumbai and Beijing report high rates of chronic respiratory problems including cancer. Air quality in large cities such as Beijing is so poor—and even dangerous—that Chinese officials have spent over 17 billion dollars in the last few years on attempts to reduce the air pollution. Despite these efforts, some Olympians refused to participate in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing because of the fear that the air quality would affect their health and their performance. Projected long-term effects of this cloud of pollution include reduced crop growth leading to famine, melting glaciers creating devastating floods, and global warming affecting rainfall average, potentially leading to drought.

Much of the pollution in India and China has been a result of factory emissions, coal-burning, and garbage-burning. Now that there have been stricter regulations governing the emission produced by factories and garbage dumps, a new culprit is emerging because of the growing wealth of these Asian countries. In recent years, both China and India have registered record-breaking economic growth rates. Personal incomes have increased, and because of the constant barrage of images from the Western media, more and more Asian citizens are buying private cars rather than relying on public transportation or more traditional forms of commuting like bicycles. In Beijing alone, 1,300 new cars are registered every day. In 2008, India's Tata motors introduced the Nano, a $2,500 car that will make car ownership accessible for millions of Indians. Environmentalists fear that the Nano will flood already gridlocked roads as well as releasing millions of tons of carbon dioxide into the already polluted air.

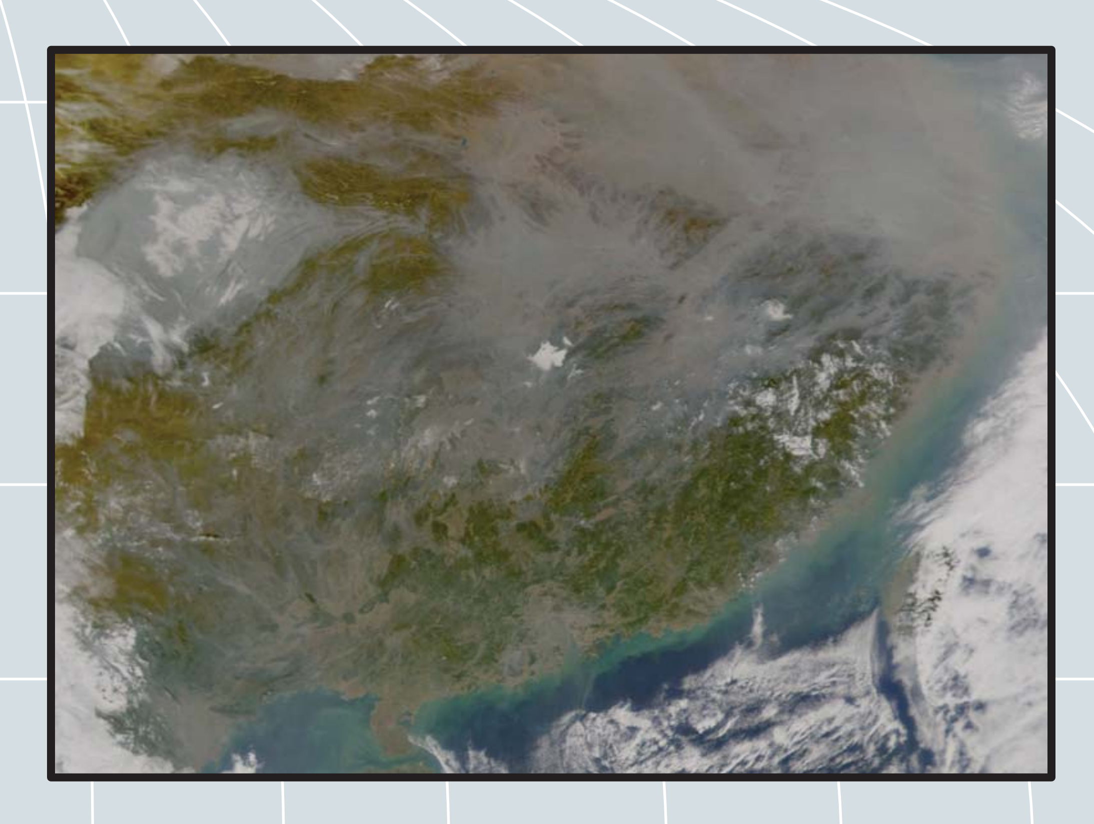
Even with the recent increases in prices, America is still the most disproportionate consumer of fossil fuels in the world. Not only do Americans drive more cars than citizens from almost any other country, we also use many times more gas than anyone else. At 446 gallons per capita annually, we're gallons ahead of the Canadians (311 gallons), boatloads ahead of countries like Germany and Italy (130 gallons and 114 gallons, respectively), and veritable oceans

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) or **agglomeration** one or more adjacent counties with at least one major city of at least 50,000 inhabitants that is surrounded by an adjacent area that is socially and economically integrated with the city

megalopolis or **megacity** a group of densely populated metropolises that grow dependent on each other and eventually combine to form a huge urban complex

U.S. Census Bureau defines the term **Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)**, also called an **agglomeration**, as a metropolitan area that includes a major city of at least 50,000 inhabitants that is surrounded by an adjacent area that is socially and economically integrated with the city. In 2006, the United States contained 363 MSAs; 50 of these had populations of one million or more (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 2006). Many of the largest American cities, such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Phoenix, and San Diego, have continued to grow rapidly in the past decade.

Largest of all is a **megalopolis**, also sometimes called a **megacity**—a group of densely populated metropolises (or agglomerations) that grow contiguous to each other and eventually combine to form a huge urban complex (Gottman 1961). One American megalopolis is referred to as "ChiPitts,"



The Asian Brown Cloud This photo from a NASA satellite shows the layer of pollution that hangs over China, India, and parts of Southwest Asia.

ahead of almost everyone else (United Nations Development Programme 2000). At the same time, developing countries like India and China are putting more and more cars on the roads. India consumed nearly 120 million tons of petroleum products in 2006–2007, according to the Petroleum Ministry, up from 113 million tons the previous year. China also saw a record high in terms of petroleum consumption in the first quarter of 2008 with a rise of 16.5 percent from the previous year. While the cars sold in China and India are not as gas-guzzling as American cars, the collective impact of the sheer number of cars owned in these densely populated countries is potentially devastating.

Rajendra Pachauri, head of the 2007 Nobel Prize–winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said that investing in improving urban public transportation and enforcing restrictions on industrial waste are ways that countries such as China and India could balance the need for fighting climate change with that for economic growth. However, the burden of the problem does not lie in the hands of the Chinese and Indian governments. Ultimately, the images transmitted from the United States are inspiring the world to aspire to the same excessive lifestyle and standard of living as those of Americans. People in developing countries want to achieve our level of economic development and our own trade policy benefits from their consumption rates when they buy our products. Can America lead by example? If we become more environmentally conscious, will the world follow suit? These are pressing questions that we will have to address in the very near future.

a group of metropolitan areas in the Midwest, extending from Pittsburgh to Chicago (and including Detroit, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis), with a total population of more than 30 million. The ChiPitts metro areas are linked not only by geographic proximity but also by economics, transportation, and communications systems (Gottman and Harper 1990). An even larger megalopolis is "BosWash," extending from Boston to Washington, D.C., and including 22 other metropolises including New York and Philadelphia. BosWash has a total population of more than 44 million, or approximately 16 percent of the entire population of the country. Megalopolises are found worldwide, in countries including Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, India, China, and Japan (Castells and Susser 2002). These are sometimes called **global cities** to emphasize their position in an increasingly globalized world as centers of economic, political, and social power (Sassen 1991).

Cities are often characterized by **urban density**,

global cities a term for megacities that emphasizes their global impact as centers of economic, political, and social power

urban density concentration of people in a city, measured by the total number of people per square mile

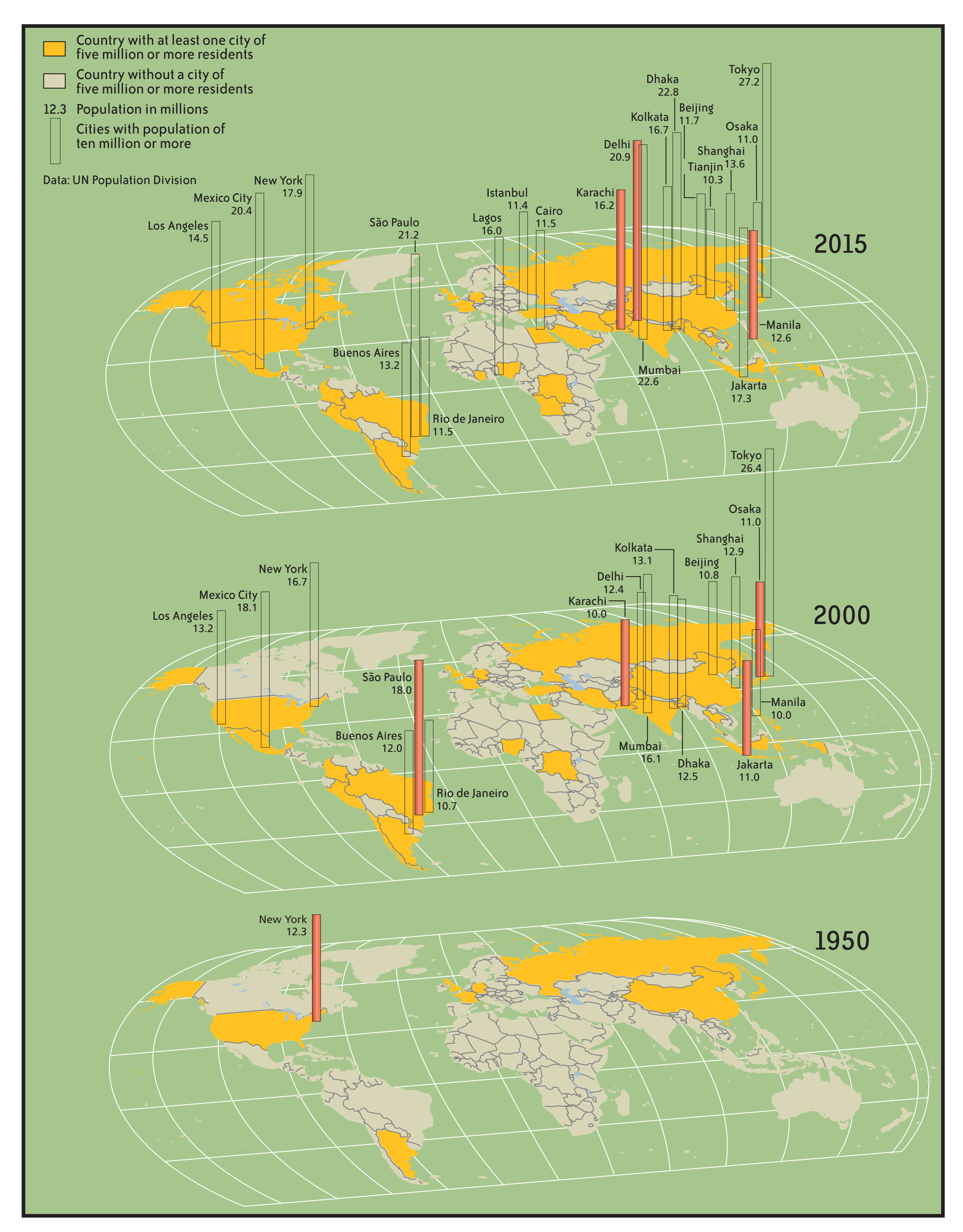


FIGURE 15.7 The Growth of Global Cities This map shows the skyrocketing growth of the world's major cities. Asia and Africa are expected to see particularly strong urban growth in the near future.

SOURCE: Zwingle 2002

measured by the total number of people per square mile. Some of the most densely populated cities in the United States include Union City, New Jersey, with 52,972 residents per square mile; New York City with 26,401; San Francisco with 16,633; and Chicago with 12,749 (U.S. Census Bureau 2005d). By contrast, rural areas are characterized by low density. Rural counties are those with populations of 10 to 59.9 people per square mile; frontier counties are those with 0.5 to 9.9 people; and remote counties are those with 0.04 people per square mile or fewer. Alaska is the most rural state in the United States, followed by Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and North Dakota.

Trends in Urbanization

Along with urbanization, an important counter-trend surfaced in the years immediately following World War II. **Suburbanization** is the shift of large segments of population away from the urban core and toward the edges of cities, where larger expanses of land were available for housing developments that provided families with a chance to buy a home of their own and avoid the overcrowding of central urban life. One of the first significant suburbs in the late 1940s was called Levittown (based on the name of the builders), a community of 17,450 tract houses for 75,000 people in Hempstead, New York. The simply designed homes were mass-produced and sold at prices affordable to returning veterans and the new growing middle class (Wattel 1958). In the 1950s, the second Levittown was built near Philadelphia and in the 1960s a third in New Jersey. Herbert Gans's study *The Levittowners* (1967) found that homeownership gave suburbanites a sense of pride and more privacy and space, which they valued greatly.

suburbanization beginning after World War II, the shift of large segments of population away from the urban core and toward the edges of cities

urban sprawl a derogatory term applied to the expansion of urban or suburban boundaries, associated with irresponsible or poorly planned development

Suburbanization also reflected a retreat from some of the problems associated with city living—close quarters, noise, and crime. As more families were able to afford single-family homes, large yards with the proverbial white picket fence and a two-car garage became the literal image of the "American Dream" (Fava 1956; Kelly 1993). But suburban life has its own problems: long commutes, little contact between neighbors, and de facto racial segregation in housing and schools. Some observers have also criticized the monotonous uniformity of the new suburbs, claiming that they promote listless personalities, conformity, and escapism (Riesman 1957; Whyte 1956; K. T. Jackson 1985). The decades-long shift of populations to the suburbs has accelerated and expanded throughout the nation, with more families moving farther and farther away into what's been called the "exurbs" (Frey 2003).

A problem related to suburbanization is **urban sprawl** (sometimes also called suburban sprawl). This phenomenon has to do with how cities and suburbs grow. It is often a derogatory term applied to the peripheral expansion of urban boundaries and is associated with irresponsible or poorly planned development. Critics say these areas are often unsightly, characterized by a homogenous landscape of



Smart Growth vs. Suburban Sprawl Urban neighborhoods like this one in Brooklyn are examples of the trend toward revitalizing America's urban centers. Pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with a mix of residential and commercial buildings are an alternative to suburban bedroom communities that have few sidewalks and many strip malls.

edge cities centers of employment and commerce that began as suburban commuter communities

smart growth term for economic and urban planning policies that emphasize the redevelopment of inner cities or older suburbs

white flight movement of upper- and middle-class whites who could afford to leave the cities for the suburbs, especially in the 1950s and 60s

urban renewal efforts to rejuvenate decaying inner cities, including renovation, selective demolition, commercial development, and tax incentives

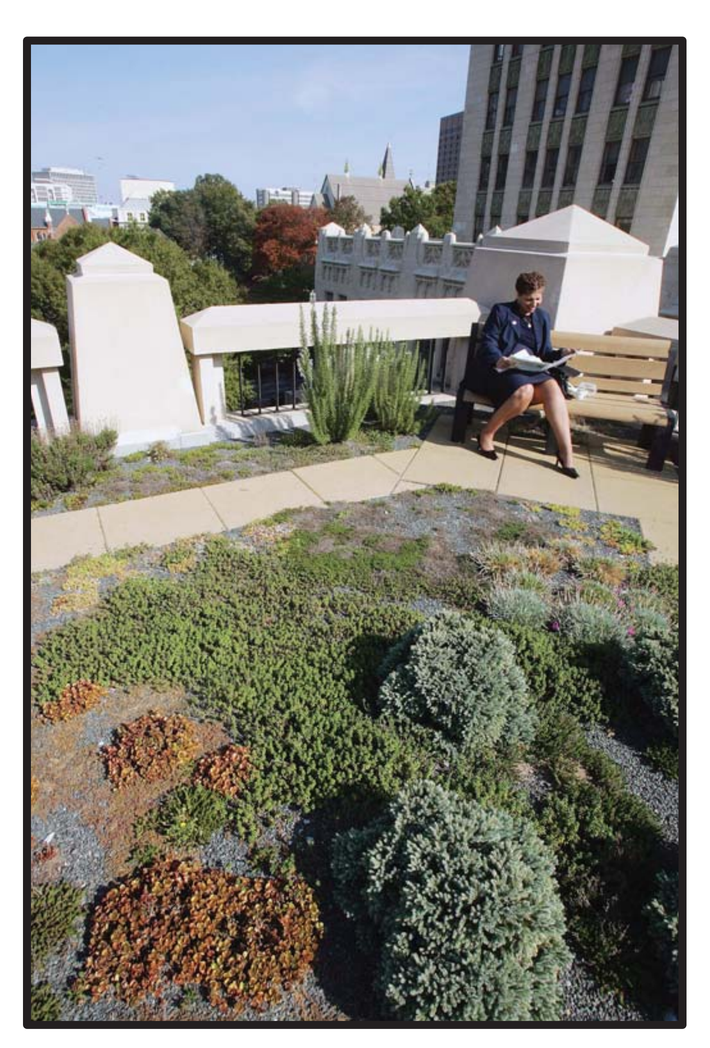
gentrification transformation of the physical, social, economic, and cultural life of formerly working-class or poor inner-city neighborhoods into more affluent middle-class communities

housing subdivisions, office parks, and corner strip-malls lacking character or green space (Kunstler 1993; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2001; Gutfreund 2004) and bringing problems of traffic, pollution, crowded schools, and high taxes.

While most suburbs remain "bedroom communities" or primarily residential, others have become **edge cities** with their own centers of employment and commerce (Garreau 1992). Edge cities are usually in close proximity to intersecting highways and urban areas. "Silicon Valley" is a prime example: the once-sleepy suburb of San Jose became a center of high-tech industry during the dot-com boom of the 1990s. Edge cities are one answer to the problems associated with suburbanization. **Smart growth** advocates are also promoting alternatives to suburban growth, emphasizing redevelopment of inner cities or older suburbs to create better communities. Elements of smart growth include town centers; transit- and pedestrian-friendly streets; a greater mix of housing, commercial, and retail properties; and the preservation of open space and other environmental amenities.

Many long-established cities suffered when populations began moving to the suburbs—such as Detroit, Chicago, and Philadelphia in the North and East (the rustbelt) as well as New Orleans, St. Louis, and San Francisco in the South, Midwest, and West (U.S. Census Bureau 2005d). Since the 1950s and 60s, people have left cities not only to find more space and bigger homes in the nearby suburbs but also because they were fleeing other problems endemic to the city. Largely, those escaping the cities were upper- and middle-class whites who could afford to leave—a trend often referred to as **white flight** (or sometimes suburban flight). Those remaining in cities were predominantly minorities, seniors, immigrants, working class, or poor. White flight left urban areas abandoned by businesses and financial institutions, leading to broken-down and boarded-up shops and streets and creating ghettos that further exacerbated the problems associated with inner cities (Wilson 1996).

In the 1960s and 70s, to address the problem of decaying inner cities, local city governments and private investors took advantage of **urban renewal** efforts that included renovation, selective demolition, commercial development, and tax incentives aimed at revitalizing business districts and residential neighborhoods (Frieden and Sagalyn 1992). Urban renewal has been a limited success. While it did revitalize many areas, it often came at a high cost to existing communities. In many cases, it resulted in the destruction of vibrant, if rundown, neighborhoods (Mollenkopf 1983).



Building "Green" Theressa Hamilton reads the newspaper as she eats lunch on the greenroof garden at Atlanta's City Hall. Her building is one of more than a dozen buildings in Atlanta designed to be more energy efficient.

Urban renewal is linked to another trend that has also changed many formerly blighted cities: **gentrification**. This is the transformation of the physical, social, economic, and cultural life of formerly working-class or poor inner-city neighborhoods into more affluent middle-class communities as wealthier people return to the cities (Glass 1964). This trend, which began in the 1990s, is evident in some of the nation's largest cities, such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco (Mele 2000). Various



Real or Fake? People mingle outside Pastis restaurant in the New York City's meatpacking district. Contrast this urban scene with the City Walk in Los Angeles, which was designed to feel like an urban street.

higher-income individuals, whether they were young professionals ("yuppies"), artists, or retirees, recognized the potential for rehabilitating downtown buildings (Castells 1984). They valued the variety and excitement of urban living more than the mini-malls of sleepy suburbia (Florida 2004). The term *gentrification* carries a distinct class connotation; while converting, renovating, remodeling, and constructing new buildings beautifies old city neighborhoods, it also increases property values and tends to displace poorer residents (Zukin 1987, 1989). Gentrification, then, does not eradicate the problems of poverty; it simply forces the poor to move elsewhere.

Although urbanization (or suburbanization) is still the predominant demographic trend in the United States, an interesting reversal emerged in 1990s, called the **rural rebound** (Johnson and Beale 1994, 1995, 1998). An increase in rural populations has resulted from a combination of fewer people leaving such areas and the in-migration of urban and suburban dwellers (Long and Nucci 1998). While most rural counties continue to decline, those near urban centers or with rich scenic or amenity values are generally experiencing an upsurge in population. Gains have been greatest in the Mountain West, Upper Great Lakes, the Ozarks, parts of the South, and rural areas of the Northeast. Rural migrants include families with young children, small-scale farmers, retirees, blue-collar

rural rebound population increase in rural counties that adjoin urban centers or possess rich scenic or amenity values

TABLE 15.1 ***Theory in Everyday Life***

Perspective	Approach to the Natural Environment	Case Study: Urban Sprawl
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	The natural world exists in order to keep the social world running smoothly. The environment provides raw materials and space for development in order to meet society's needs.	As populations increase, cities must grow in order to accommodate the growing population, so urban sprawl is functional for society.
CONFLICT THEORY	Not all groups or individuals benefit equally from society's use of the natural environment.	Urban sprawl creates largely white, upper and middle-class suburbs around cities whose residents are minorities, seniors, immigrants, working class, and/or poor. This means that suburban residents may have access to resources, like well-funded schools, which urban-dwellers may not.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	The meanings assigned to the natural environment will determine how society sees and uses it.	Redefining open land as a scarce resource, and redefining urban areas as valuable spaces, may lead to the reduction of urban sprawl: open land could be conserved, while urban spaces could be rehabilitated and revitalized.

On the Job

Operation Weed and Seed

On any given day, Ashley Enter may consult with a U.S. attorney or a local church leader, design a mental health resource directory, help set up a job training center, attend a neighborhood association meeting, or meet with landlords who want to keep their rental properties crime- and drug-free. Ashley's job as the Weed and Seed Coordinator for the city of Peoria, Illinois, means that she is in charge of a host of community-based initiatives meant to revitalize high-crime urban neighborhoods. Operation Weed and Seed is a community-based, multiagency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and neighborhood restoration and is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice. The "weeding" process involves local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and targets violent crime and gang- and drug-related activity through programs such as community policing. But the program is not merely a crack-down on crime. The "seeding" process is equally—if not more—important.

"Seeding" involves a variety of programs designed to help transform previously unsafe neighborhoods into places where individuals, families, and community spirit can thrive. The Peoria Weed and Seed program is a good example of how many different organizations and services are necessary to effectively seed a neighborhood: a "Safe Haven" located in a local hospital provides job training, mentoring, tutoring, and computer access; Safe Havens at several area churches provide after-school services and counseling for families and individuals. Other activities include neighborhood cleanup and beautification programs, mutual assistance services (such as one program in which volunteers do chores including shoveling snow or pulling weeds for elderly or handicapped neighbors), and fun events such as block parties and cookouts.

Operation Weed and Seed's multifaceted approach is admirable in that it refuses to oversimplify the complex problems of urban living by mandating reductive remedies. It's not a panacea either, for a variety of reasons. Ashley spends a good deal of her time, for example, navigating the byzantine bureaucracies of the many local, state, and federal agencies involved in the program. Organizing and attending meetings, scheduling telephone conferences, seeking committee approval for program decisions, writing and filing endless reports, and coordinating the demands of multiple funding sources are some of the challenges she faces in the office. Outside the office, the program runs up against a number of obstacles as well, not least of which is longstanding mutual suspicion between residents and police. But progress is being made.



Operation Weed and Seed Ascher Henrikson uses a magnifying glass to see worms and other creatures in a compost pile at the Earth Day celebrations in Peoria, Illinois.

Ashley graduated from Southern Illinois University with a bachelor's degree in public relations and a minor in community development. She joined the AmeriCorps VISTA program (Volunteers in Service to America) and built low-income housing with Habitat for Humanity. After her VISTA service was completed, she took a development job with the American Red Cross. Then she entered city government, specializing in neighborhood coordination and liaison work. She took the Weed and Seed job because she believes strongly in the values, goals, and strategies of the program, and despite the bureaucratic obstacles and funding uncertainties, she is optimistic about the program's potential to make a real difference in the city of Peoria and in the lives of the people living there.

For more information about Operation Weed and Seed, visit its website: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ccdo/ws/welcome.html.



City of the Future In the film *The Fifth Element*, flying cars buzz between ultra-tall sky scrapers. Could this version of the future realistically occur? Would you like to live in such a future?

workers, single professionals, and disenchanted city dwellers all seeking a better way of life. They are willing to forsake the amenities of the city in exchange for a simpler, slower, more traditional rural lifestyle (K. Johnson 1999).

Another example of our contemporary ambivalence about city life is simulated cities—social spaces engineered to maximize the benefits of city life without the risks. A prime example is Universal CityWalk, a collection of shops, restaurants, and movie theaters in a suburb of Los Angeles. CityWalk mimics an urban shopping street, with sidewalk café seating and strolling street performers. However, it has no connection to a real urban street—CityWalk is bordered on one side by a theme park (Universal Studios) and on the other by a vast expanse of parking lots and freeway traffic. The parking fees to visit this street range from $7.50 to $17.50, which makes CityWalk a semiprivate attraction—distinctly unlike a real city street, which anyone can walk on without paying high fees for parking. The parking fees were instituted to minimize certain kinds of visitors found on real city streets including homeless people and hustlers of various sorts.

The urban experience provided by CityWalk is sanitized, soothing, and a model of social control through architectural planning. Says Kevin McNamara, of the University of Houston, "They omitted . . . the handbill-passers, bag ladies, streetcorner salesmen, and three-card-monte—because part of CityWalk's attraction rests on the certainty that distractions will remain pleasing, never truly surprising, let alone shocking" (McNamara 1999). CityWalk doesn't reject the grit of urban life entirely: when laying the sidewalks, developers embedded fake trash in the concrete. CityWalk and other artificial urban environments such as Celebration and Seaside, Florida, reveal our desire to experience the positive aspects of urban life without having to endure the problems. But this kind of engineering tends to turn cities into theme parks, erasing what is authentically urban—for better and for worse.

DATA WORKSHOP



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Imagining the Cities of Tomorrow

People have always been interested in the future. Storytellers, inventors, scientists, politicians, and daydreamers have tried to imagine and in some instances create a vision of what will come.

Imagining the city of tomorrow is an almost constant theme in contemporary popular culture—books and comics, radio and TV, movies, and video games. Some of these represent a brighter vision of tomorrow, a **utopia** where humankind is finally freed from drudgery and disease, strife and suffering. Some represent a darker vision of tomorrow, a **dystopia** where humankind is trapped in a ruthless, apocalyptic world of machines and nature gone mad.

Although examples of the city of the future appear in many different media, this Data Workshop asks that you focus on film. You may have a favorite movie depicting the future, whether it's in the genre of science fiction, fantasy, thriller, horror, drama, or comedy. In deciding which movie to choose for your content analysis, consider

utopia literally "no place"; an ideal society in which all social ills have been overcome

dystopia opposite of a utopia—a world where social problems are magnified and the quality of life is extremely low

social atomization a social situation that emphasizes individualism over collective or group identities

urbanites people who live in cities

whether the movie proposes a serious or realistic possibility of the future and avoid anything too far out in terms of monsters, aliens, or fantasy worlds.

Below is a partial list of movies that could satisfy the assignment. This list is not exhaustive, and you may prefer to use a film not in the list.*

12 Monkeys	*Left Behind*
1984	*Mad Max*
A.I. (Artificial Intelligence)	*The Matrix*
Back to the Future	*Metropolis*
Blade Runner	*Minority Report*
Brazil	*Road Warrior*
Children of Men	*Slaughterhouse Five*
The Day after Tomorrow	*Solaris*
Demolition Man	*Strange Days*
eXistenZ	*The Terminator*
Fahrenheit 451	*Terminator 2: Judgment Day*
The Fifth Element	*Total Recall*
Gattaca	*Tron*
Idiotocracy	*The Truman Show*
Independence Day	*Videodrome*

Watch the movie while keeping in mind the concepts you have learned from this chapter, especially with regard to urbanization. Note the settings and environments in the movie. Capture key scenes or dialogue that can serve as examples of your argument. In conducting your content analysis, consider some of the following questions.

- At what point in the future does the movie take place?
- What is the major theme of the movie? What is its overall message?
- Does the movie represent a utopian or dystopian vision of the future? Does it represent positive or negative changes to society?
- What sorts of futuristic elements are included in the movie (such as time travel, virtual reality, mind control, wars between humans and machines, apocalyptic destruction)?
- How is the modern city or landscape of the future depicted? What are its structural features in both public and private realms?
- Compare the future with the present. How is the future the same or different? How is it better or worse?
- What are people like in the future? How are they affected by their environment? How does their environment impact their lives?
- Could this version of the future realistically occur? Would you like to live in such a future?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Follow the instructions for viewing the movie, and reflect on the questions above. You may wish to take notes to prepare for a discussion with other students in small groups. Compare and contrast the movies you watched with others in the group. What similarities or differences are there between movies?
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Follow the instructions for viewing the movie, and write a three- to four-page essay answering the questions above.

Living in the City

Who lives in cities? What about city life continues to attract droves of people? Big cities offer residents bright lights, a fast pace, excitement, and opportunity. They differ from small rural towns and suburban neighborhoods, so a certain type of person is more likely to be found living there.

Louis Wirth, a member of the Chicago School of sociology, proposed "urbanism as a way of life" that affected the outlook, mentality, and lifestyle of those who lived in the city. He believed that cities provided personal freedom, relaxed moral restraints, relative anonymity, variety, and diversity. At the same time there was a certain social cost involved. People tended to belong to more formal organizations with more narrow goals and to engage less frequently in intimate interaction with one another. His analysis was in line with the belief that cities caused **social atomization**, that they were filled with free-floating individuals rather than members of a community (Wirth 1938).

Another sociologist, Claude Fischer, found that people create a sense of community by dividing the city into little worlds within which they feel familiar and involved. These groups allowed for informal and close relationships, giving city dwellers more intimacy and a feeling of belonging (C. Fischer 1976).

In 1962, Herbert Gans published a major ethnographic study, *Urban Villagers*, in which he identified distinct categories of **urbanites**, or people who live in urban areas. The first are called *cosmopolites*—students, intellectuals,

* Please be aware of MPAA ratings for movies and select appropriate material for your age group.

In Relationships

Encounters with Strangers

Cities are places where strangers come together. Before there were cities, there were also no strangers; those who were unknown were driven off, killed, or quickly assimilated into the clan, tribe, or group (Lofland 1973). With the advent of cities came the prospect of living life in close proximity to hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people we will never know and from whom we cannot be completely segregated. City life would seem to bring the prospect for all sorts of chaos and conflict—and yet every day, in contemporary cities, millions of people go about their business in relative harmony, brushing elbows with each other on the sidewalk or subway in encounters that are neither friendly nor unfriendly but merely orderly.

What are the interactional structures that order urban life? Public interactions with strangers can be treacherous, as we encounter people we do not know and whose reactions we cannot predict. For the most part, we are not talking about the danger of physical attack. More common than getting mugged is being "looked at funny," getting "goosed," or being the target of "wolf whistles." These are threats to self more than anything else—being treated as a nonperson, or as a piece of meat. How do we guard against these minor molestations when we walk down the street every day?

A specific way we deal with strangers in public is by doing what Erving Goffman calls **civil inattention**. This is a taken-for-granted rule of public place interaction, a basic public courtesy we extend to one another that helps guard against unpleasant interactions with strangers (Goffman 1971). About eight or ten feet away from one another, we tend to look at and then look away from the person we are approaching—all in one sweep of our gaze. We have looked, but not too intently or for too long. This allows us to navigate through urban spaces without bumping into strangers and to avoid the kinds of interactions that might lead to trouble. The practice of civil inattention is so commonplace that you may not realize you do it every day. Now, walk down the street and notice your own gazework and that of others—with full comprehension of how this simple act helps avoid conflict, enables smooth interactions between strangers, and basically makes city life possible.



Sidewalk Etiquette Whether listening to an iPod, talking on a cell phone, or just averting their gaze, urbanites use civil inattention to order public place interaction.

artists, entertainers, and other professionals who are drawn to the city because of its cultural benefits and convenience to their lifestyles. The next group are the *singles*, unmarried people seeking jobs, entertainment, and partners with whom to settle down. Singles may include cosmopolites as well. When singles do find a marriage partner or mate, they tend to move to the suburbs, often in preparation to start a family.

Another group of city dwellers are the *ethnic villagers*, often recent immigrants to the area. They tend to settle near others with whom they share a common racial, ethnic, national, religious, or language background; these are often distant relatives or others with whom they have a connection. This is why many major cities still have Chinatowns, Little Italys, and other ethnic neighborhoods. Once here, immigrants form tightly knit ethnic enclaves that resemble

the villages of their home countries. The last group of urban dwellers is the *deprived* and the *trapped*. These are the people at the bottom of the social hierarchy—the poor, homeless, disabled, elderly, and mentally ill. Without resources and means of support they cannot afford to leave the city, even if they could find jobs, services, or housing elsewhere; they are inescapably stuck where they are. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and despair.



Kitty Genovese

Alienation and Altruism: The Case of New York City

As products of the Industrial Revolution, cities are celebrated for providing unprecedented degrees of freedom for individuals. Life in rural agricultural communities was much more restrictive, with family and neighbors placing tight constraints on behavior. However, sociology has been suspicious of cities, seeing this very freedom as a source of **alienation**. Early sociologist Georg Simmel argued that while urban environments "allowed a much greater degree of individual liberty," they did so only "at the expense of treating others in objective and instrumental terms" relating to others only through a "cold and heartless calculus" (Harvey 1990). In short, except for their chosen subcultures, city dwellers fail to develop community, feel little connection with neighbors, have relationships that are largely shallow and impersonal, and fail to care about each other (Simmel 1950).

The murder of Catherine "Kitty" Genovese has come to represent all such fears about urban life. Late March 13, 1964, she was returning home from her job as a bar manager when she was attacked by a man named Winston Moseley. He first attacked Genovese after she parked her car outside the Kew Gardens apartment building where she lived. She was stabbed several times before her attacker was frightened off when lights went on in nearby apartments. Badly wounded and bleeding Genovese was later reported to have shouted, "Oh, my God, he stabbed me! Please help me! Please help me!" (Gansberg 1964). Somehow she then made her way to the back of the building, apparently trying to get to the staircase that led to her apartment. However, her assailant returned and stabbed and beat her to death, before sexually assaulting her. The entire attack, although intermittent, was reported to have lasted nearly 30 minutes.

alienation decreasing importance of social ties and community and the corresponding increase in impersonal associations and instrumental logic

As horrible as this was, it wouldn't be remembered today if it were just a tragic murder. What has made this case memorable was the number of bystanders who must have heard the crime taking place but failed to take action. A friend of Genovese made the following comments during an interview on National Public Radio in 2004, some 40 years after the crime took place.

> The police later established that 38 people either saw Kitty Genovese stabbed and raped or heard her scream for her life, but no one called the police; no one rushed down to the street to try to scare off her attacker. Her death was a small story in the next day's newspapers, but two weeks later, the *New York Times* ran a story on how shocked the Queens police had been that so many people heard Kitty Genovese being murdered and didn't lift a finger to help her. The story set off a national soul-searching. How could so many Americans, even New Yorkers, it was sometimes added, have turned away from cries for help? The murder of Kitty Genovese became a kind of modern morality tale. Her death seemed to symbolize an age in which people counseled, "Don't get involved." "Mind your own business." "Not in my back yard." (S. Simon 2004)

A. M. Rosenthal, who was the editor of the *New York Times* in 1964, later wrote a book about the incident, which focused attention on the most disturbing aspect of the case: why didn't somebody help her? For many this seemed to be the ultimate indictment of big cities in general, and New York City in particular, but much of the press coverage seemed to demonize the individuals involved. Regardless of the individual responsibility, it's important to also look at the social factors that made the situation possible.

Especially useful in understanding the social origins of this unfortunate incident has been the work of social psychologists John Darley and Bibb Latane (1968), who conducted several experiments on **altruism** and helping behaviors. These experiments were designed to test what came to be called the **bystander effect**, or the **diffusion of responsibility**. In one experiment, different-sized groups of test subjects heard what sounded like a woman having an accident in the next room. Darley and Latane found that the higher the number of bystanders present, the lower the chances that any of them would attempt to help. Basically, they theorized that the responsibility "diffused" throughout the crowd so that no one person felt responsible enough to do anything, most assuming that someone else would help. However, when groups were small, the chances that someone would do something increased greatly.

In a similar experiment, they placed different-sized groups of subjects in a room, under the pretense of taking a test, and gradually filled the room with smoke. Again, they found that the greater the number of subjects in a room, the lower the chances that anyone would mention the smoke. Here, along with the diffusion of responsibility, they argued that **pluralistic ignorance** was at work. When large groups of people encounter an ambiguous or unusual situation, they tend to look to each other for help in defining the situation. If no member of the group decides that it is an emergency, and therefore worthy of worry, it is likely that all members will continue to ignore the situation.

On the twentieth anniversary of the Genovese murder, Fordham University held the "Catherine Genovese Memorial Conference on Bad Samaritanism," which attempted to shed some light on what sorts of situations would produce bystanders who would help. Although no single character trait correlated with being a Good Samaritan, they largely confirmed earlier findings—that bystanders in groups were tentative about helping, especially when they were unsure of the nature of the problem.

These conclusions can also help to explain a time when New Yorkers did come to each other's aid out of a sense of belonging and **community**: in the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center. In the hours and days after the attacks, Americans rushed to help however they could. "Tens of thousands of patriotic Americans rolled up their sleeves and gave blood," monetary donations poured in, and ordinary New Yorkers rushed to pitch in (Stapleton 2002). Some of the most heroic rescue efforts at the World Trade Center were made by ordinary people who rushed to help as soon as they heard. Two Port Authority Police Officers, Will Jimeno and John McLoughlin, were the last people to be found alive in the collapsed remains of the World Trade Center towers. They were discovered by Charles Sereika, a former paramedic, and David Karnes, "an accountant from Connecticut" who "had changed into his Marine camouflage outfit" and driven down to Manhattan as soon as he heard the news (Dwyer 2001). The movie *World Trade Center* (2006) by Oliver Stone depicts their story. And even if things have somewhat returned to normal (meaning people are less friendly now), almost everyone agrees that New Yorkers "were wonderful during the crisis, and we were tender to each other. . . . Volunteers streamed to the site" and "after only a few days there were so many, they were turned away by the hundreds. . . . Strangers spoke to each other in the street, in stores, and on the subway" (Hustvedt 2002).

So what made the difference in the two events? Many of those who heard Kitty Genovese being murdered believed that it was a bar fight or a lover's quarrel. Not knowing what was happening, they were unsure how to respond. With September 11 there was no ambiguity. Also, on September 11 many people understood where to go and what to do to help. In 1964 the "911" emergency system didn't exist, and many people were reluctant to get personally involved with the police. This largely supports the conclusions of sociologists like Lee Clarke (2001), who has studied how people respond to various kinds of disasters. His work shows that altruism, rather than panic, tends to prevail in disasters. Clarke posits that the rules for behavior in extreme situations are essentially the same as the rules of ordinary life—that when faced with danger, people help those next to them before helping themselves. This was the case in the destruction of the World Trade Center. People survived the disaster because they did not become hysterical but instead helped to facilitate a successful evacuation of the buildings (Clarke, 2001). There are many obvious reasons why the September 11 attacks would bring people together in ways that the attack on Kitty Genovese did not. September 11 was clearly and obviously a disaster; it was also an attack on the entire country, so loyalties were further cemented. Formal institutions were set up so people could easily volunteer and receive positive social sanctions in return. Kitty Genovese was just one young woman living in a building full of immigrants and elderly pensioners. However, whenever bystanders do jump in to help, it is in part because of the outrage her murder provoked.

altruism unselfish concern for the well-being of others and helping behaviors performed without self-interested motivation

bystander effect or **diffusion of responsibility** the social dynamic wherein the more people there are present in a moment of crisis, the less likely any one of them is to take action

pluralistic ignorance a process in which members of a group individually conclude that there is no need to take action because of the observation that other group members have not done so

community a group of people living in the same local area who share a sense of participation and fellowship



Urban Legends Worried about razor blades or poison in his children's Halloween candy, Ray Orozco inspects their haul after a night of trick-or-treating in Miami, Florida.

In the aftermath of the Kitty Genovese murder, the "911" emergency system was created, neighborhood watch groups were formed, Good Samaritan laws were passed to protect bystanders from liability in emergencies, and people started to get more involved.

Urban Legends

The story of Kitty Genovese's murder is true. But that cannot be said about every sensational story you hear, especially if it is passed along through informal social networks among friends or over the internet.

Did you hear the one about the missing kidneys? A businessman was attending a convention in Las Vegas, and after a hard day's work he stopped off for a drink in the hotel lounge. A prostitute approached him, and after a few drinks, she suggested they go up to his room. The next morning the business traveler woke up in a bathtub, filled with ice, and a note telling him that if he wanted to live he should call "911" immediately. The emergency dispatcher asked him to examine his lower back, where he found two neat incisions. The traveler was then told to get back in the tub and wait for help because his kidneys had been removed by black market organ thieves.

urban legend modern folklore; a story that is believed (incorrectly) to be true and is widely spread because it expresses concerns, fears, and anxieties about the social world

Or maybe you're more familiar with the alligators in the New York City sewers, purchased as pets when still small but flushed down the toilet, where they grew to full size. Perhaps you've heard about apples with razor blades given to trick-or-treaters on Halloween. Or that the taco restaurant down the street has an earthworm farm that supplies their "ground beef." Or maybe you even got an e-mail from Bill Gates promising to give you a $1,000 if you forwarded an e-mail often enough, because he was testing new e-mail tracking software. If you live near Southern California or in Puerto Rico you may have even heard about the "chupacabra," a blood-sucking alien devil beast that preys on goats and the occasional stray dog.

All are examples of **urban legends**, a specific and very modern variety of folklore. The study of folklore involves "collecting, classifying, and interpreting in their full cultural context the many products of everyday human interaction that have acquired a somewhat stable underlying form" (Brunvand 1981, p. 2). Folklorists look at fairy tales, legends, folk music, jokes, and other forms of popular art because understanding the themes and ideas that commonly appear in such material can tell you a great deal about the culture that produced it. Urban legends, in particular, are defined by their believability and their contemporary setting; they are often legitimated or "authenticated" through either personal acquaintance with a supposed witness or some sort of media coverage.

An urban legend can be defined as a story that is bizarre, whimsical, 99 percent apocryphal yet believable, a story that

is almost, but not quite, too good to be true (Brunvand 2001). Incredible stories exist in many forms, like ghost stories that are told around a campfire; but to work as an urban legend, people must believe that the story is true or could be true. Jan Brunvand, a noted folklorist, says that urban legends are particularly compelling because someone claims that "the story is true; it really occurred, and recently, and always to someone else who is quite close to the narrator, or at least a 'friend of a friend' " (1981, p. 4).

Urban legends are like a folk sociology, as every successful urban legend is told and retold because it expresses "in a succinct and entertaining form what narrators wish to present as a truth about contemporary life and behavior" (Boyes 1984, p. 64). Two qualities of an urban legend can contribute to its success. First, the most popular legends are repeated and spread because they speak to our concerns, fears, and anxieties about our social world. Often there is a moral expressing the "fears and anxieties of a group and serv[ing] as warnings about potentially dangerous situations, behaviors, and assumptions." In this way urban legends serve a function in society "whether of education, social control, expression of attitudes and emotions, or strengthening of social bonds" (Whatley and Henken 2000, pp. 2, 6). For instance, stories about Halloween candy with razor blades warn us not to trust strangers (Best and Horiuchi 1985). Stories about condoms or intravenous needles in soft drink cans play on fears about the purity of our food. Stories about serial killers and crime often reveal our fears of being alone or of being among strangers in the darkened world outside the security of our own home or car (Brunvand 1981).

A second quality that contributes to the success of an urban legend is its affective punch. Urban legends that circulate the most tend to inspire an emotional reaction—typically anger, fear, disgust, or amusement. One study conducted at Duke University to determine what drives urban legends took a number of familiar stories and created several variations, each inspiring varying degrees of disgust. Undergraduates in the study were then asked to retell the stories. The researchers found that while transmitting basic information was important, the students preferred to tell versions that elicited the most emotion from listeners (Lockman 2002).

The most popular urban legends may be circulated for years, and though they may traverse the nation, they are often given local details in the telling, which makes them seem more believable (Best and Horiuchi 1985). In some ways modern technology has changed the dissemination of urban legends. The internet and e-mail have vastly accelerated the speed and reach of the modern urban legend. As Brunvand recounts, "a combination of oral tradition, electronic communication and mass media exposure have sustained a wide range of modern urban legends over broad areas of space and long stretches of time" (1981); stories that "are simply too beguiling to fade away" are now spread faster and to more people than ever before (Jensen 2000). Ironically, electronic communication may actually slow the rate of change to stories, as people may simply cut and paste or forward e-mail messages verbatim. Whether told face-to-face or through electronic media, the continued circulation of urban legends speaks to the enduring power of a few compelling themes about modern social life.



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Urban Legends

Surely you've heard an urban legend. Perhaps it was from a family member, friend, classmate, or colleague, or you might have found it on the internet. Urban legends are compelling because they reflect a near-universal fear of the unknown, of the mysterious forces that may come at us unexpectedly and at any moment. They are often a response to social strain caused by fears and anxieties of modern life. And in a world of terrorism, drive-by shootings, biological weapons, and natural disasters, such tales resonate, reflecting the very real social conditions in which we live.

The wonderful thing about looking at urban legends is the opportunity they give anyone to engage in sociological research. Content analysis of urban legends helps us come to a better understanding of our own culture. Here are the instructions for this Data Workshop.

1. Identify and select an urban legend (you may find your own sources or use those listed at www.snopes.com).
    a. Where did you find this urban legend? Is it available from a variety of sources? Had you heard it before?
    b. Can you determine how long it has been circulating and through what types of social networks?
    c. What made you choose this particular story? Why does it intrigue you?

2. Apply the following definition to make sure that the content of the urban legend you selected has the necessary elements:
    a. Believable—Can it be assumed to be true as told? Is there, or could there be, an actual event that inspired this urban legend?
    b. Contemporary—Are the settings and events part of everyday life?
    c. Legitimizing or authenticating element—Does it contain a reference to a personal acquaintance or

social ecology the study of human populations and their impact on the natural world

friend-of-a-friend who was a supposed witness? Or has it been covered in the media?

3. Why has this urban legend been repeated and spread? What makes it so appealing? Most urban legends will have most or all of the following elements:
   a. Does it play on easily shared emotions like fear, anger, disgust, amusement, greed, or shock?
   b. Could it serve as a moral or cautionary tale? Would there be some advantage to heeding the warning of the story?
   c. Does it illustrate the anxieties, fears, concerns, values, attitudes, interests, or beliefs of the cultural group telling it?

Use the preceding outline as a guide to doing a content analysis of the urban legend you selected. Explain why you think it meets the criteria described above. Consider these additional questions: In what ways is the urban legend you selected similar to or different from others? Does the story help to support the status quo, reconfirming the need for social order? Or does it somehow undermine conventional norms and values? What truths does it reveal about modern life?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal):* Follow the instructions above for selecting and analyzing an urban legend. You will need to bring to class a copy of the story plus any informal notes regarding your analysis to discuss with other students in small groups. Compare stories among group members, looking for similarities and differences.

- *Option 2 (formal)*: Follow the instructions above for analyzing the urban legend you selected. Write a three- to four-page essay answering all of the questions above. Don't forget to include an exact copy of the story in your paper.

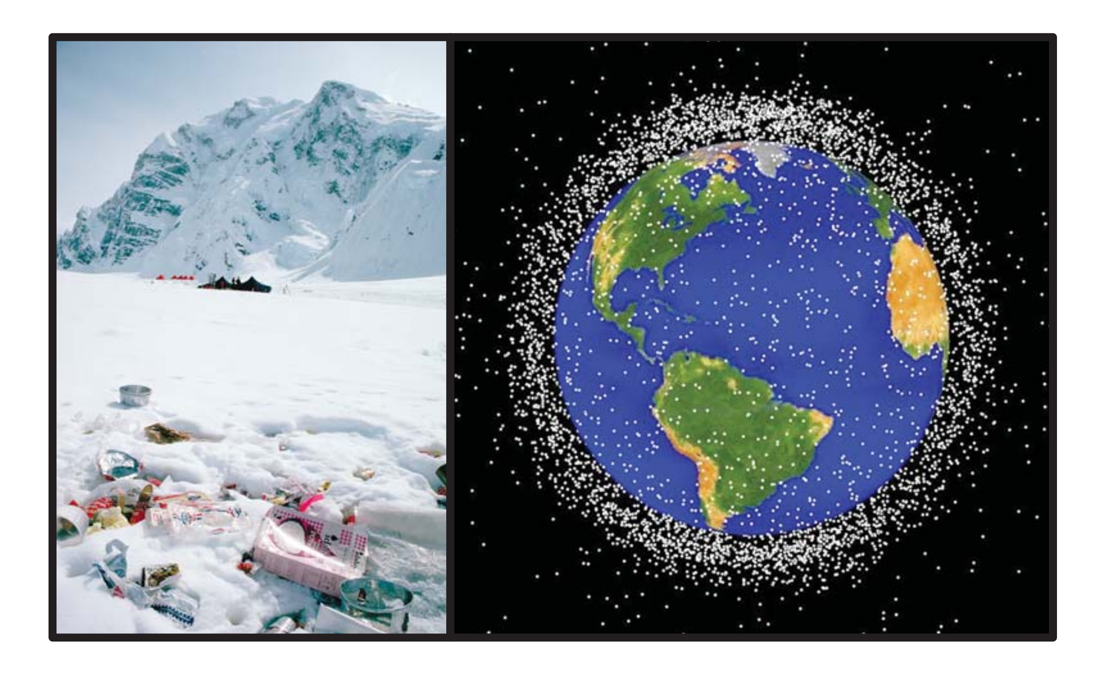
The Environment

The final section of this chapter once again considers the connection between the social and the natural worlds. Human populations have grown tremendously, as have the cities in which most of them live. Now how do those people interact with the natural environment and what impact does the environment have on how they live? Whether we go camping, go surfing, or just take a walk through Central Park, we all go to nature to escape, to recreate, to relax. It is ironic that we now seek out nature as a retreat from the demands of society because society itself originated and evolved at least in part to protect us against the demands of nature. The cooperation and interdependence that characterize most social groups allow individuals to withstand the risks of the natural environment. The products of culture—clothing, architecture, automobiles, and many others—contribute to our ability to live in what would otherwise be inhospitable surroundings. Without her insulated house and its furnace, her layers of clothing topped with a Gore-Tex parka, and her car with a remote starter and all-weather tires, Dr. Ferris would have a hard time surviving the harsh winters in northern Illinois. And all these survival tools are supplied because she is part of a society whose other members have created what she needs to be safe and warm in the elements. Society provides all of us with a buffer against nature; without it, we wouldn't last very long in the ocean, the snowdrifts, or the desert plains.

Social Ecology

While society buffers individuals against the rigors of nature, it also allows them to impact the natural world. Trees are cut down to build homes; furnaces and automobiles burn fuels and create air pollution; and manufacturing artificial fibers creates chemical waste—just a few of the ways the collective actions of a society impact the natural world. The study of human populations and their impact on the natural world is called **social ecology**. Under this heading you might study how cities are organized, how populations migrate, or how technological developments influence the social order, to see how these social developments occur within a physical environment that shapes and responds to social trends.

Sociologists are interested in both the social and the natural worlds because those worlds interact with each other. Even the most remote corner of the Amazon rainforest is not immune from the effects of society, even if no human has ever set foot there. Global warming is slowly changing that forest's climate; jets fly above the trees, creating noise and pollution; and animals that have been squeezed out of their natural habitats elsewhere (by trends like urban sprawl) may begin moving into new territories, upsetting the balance of native creatures and plants. Society impacts nature relentlessly—and vice versa—as the rhythms, rigors, and risks of the natural world shape how society is organized.



Social Ecology Society affects nature even in the remotest places—including on the highest mountaintops and in outer space! Hikers leave garbage on Mount McKinley (left), and NASA illustrates the debris orbiting the Earth (right). The European Space Agency estimates that there are 8,500 objects larger than 3 inches wide currently circling the planet.

Studying the Environment

The environment is a recent area of interest among sociologists, coinciding with the general public's concern about environmental issues (Guber 2003). When sociologists use the term **environment**, it encompasses aspects of both the natural and the human-made environment and includes everything from the most micro level of organisms to the entire **biosphere**. Sociologists study the ways that societies are dependent on the natural world; how cultural values and beliefs shape views about and influence usage of the environment; the politics and economics of natural resources; and the social construction of conflicts, problems, and solutions that are a result of our relationship to the natural world.

Environmental sociology is a growing subfield within the larger discipline that has continued to gain scholarly interest and to impact other academics, policy makers, and society as a whole. Its emergence paralleled the modern environmental movement in the late 1970s. The contours of the subfield are still being established, as we will see in the next section.

First, we will look at the environment as a social problem. This encompasses two big areas: problems of consumption and problems of waste. Sociologists, however, must look beyond descriptions of problems and attempt to apply analytic frameworks for understanding the social complexities underlying them.

The Environment as a Social Problem

Many students first become acquainted with the subject of the environment as a social problem. Learning the "three R's" in schools has now come to mean Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. We need to help "save" the environment because it is under threat from consumption and waste.

PROBLEMS OF CONSUMPTION: RESOURCE DEPLETION

The planet Earth provides an abundance of natural resources, including air, water, land, wildlife, plants, and minerals. We have learned to exploit these resources not only for basic survival but also to build everything in material culture that is part of the modern world. Humans have long been presented with the challenge of managing their use of natural resources, but those challenges have changed in the postindustrial era.

Renewable resources are natural resources that can be regenerated—for instance, oxygen is replenished by plants and trees, water by evaporation and rain clouds, trees and plants by pollens and seeds, and animals by mating and reproduction. **Nonrenewable resources** are those that cannot be replaced (except through tens of thousands of years of geological processes)—for instance, fossil fuels like oil or minerals like coal, copper, or iron.

environment in sociology, the natural world, the human-made environment, and the interaction between the two

biosphere the parts of the earth that can support life

environmental sociology the study of the interaction between society and the natural environment, including the social causes and consequences of environmental problems

renewable resources resources that replenish at a rate comparable to the rate at which they are consumed

nonrenewable resources finite resources, including those that take so long to replenish as to be effectively finite



Threats to Biodiversity Rainforests, which play a key role in regulating the global climate and are home to almost 50 percent of the world's plant and animal species, are being destroyed at a rate of millions of acres each year.

All natural resources are susceptible to overuse or overconsumption and eventually to depletion or even exhaustion. As a result of rising demands, we have already seen rising costs or outright shortages for such commodities as seafood, timber, and gasoline.

It may be hard to imagine that we'll ever run out of some things, like air and water, but even these are threatened. We may not be aware of the connection between the things we consume in our everyday life and their sources. We're removed from the fields and the mines, the oceans and the mountains that are the origin of our goods. But we are already confronting real problems of resource depletion, and the course of such depletion may now be irreversible.

One of the world's most pressing problems is how to meet enormous and growing demands for energy. We need energy—gas, electric, or nuclear—to help us power everything from our cars and televisions to factories and airplanes. But these forms of energy are not inexhaustible. We have relied primarily on nonrenewable sources such as coal and fossil fuels to meet our needs. The current mix of fuel sources comes from 78 percent fossil, 18 percent renewables, and 4 percent nuclear. Some renewable sources besides wood and hydroelectric (water-generated) power, such as wind or solar power, are being developed, but they are not sufficient yet to provide us with the substantial quantities of energy we will need in the future.

Industrialized nations are the largest consumers of energy, using approximately 70 percent of the total energy produced in the world; of those nations, America uses nearly 25 percent, Japan uses close to 6 percent, and Germany 4 percent. Developing nations that now use the remaining 30 percent are becoming more industrialized, and their energy needs will also increase, thus closing the energy usage gap among nations over the next 25 years. In that same time, total worldwide energy consumption is projected to grow between 50 and 60 percent (Energy Information Administration 2004). Oil is a finite resource, and at some point the supply will be exhausted. We may have already hit a peak of production and are in decline. We know that limited amounts and rising costs of energy are likely to spur development of substitutes for oil.

Another critical area of consumption is the rainforests in South America, Central America, Australia, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Rainforests are ecosystems located in tropical and temperate regions that are home to diverse plant and animal life (as well as indigenous peoples). Although rainforests cover only about 6 percent of the earth's landmass, they contain close to 50 percent of all microorganisms and plant and animal species in the world (Mittermeier, Myers, and Mittermeier 2000). Previously unknown life forms are being discovered there every year, while at the same time thousands are being driven to extinction. Products derived from the rainforest include not only foods and woods, but importantly, pharmaceuticals; more than 7,000 medical compounds are derived from native plants. Rainforests also play a key role in global climate control, evaporation and rainfall, and clearing the air of carbon dioxide (Myers and Kent 2005).

In 1950, rainforests covered twice as much area as they do today, and they are disappearing at an alarming rate. Currently, there are approximately 3.5 billion acres of rainforest worldwide, down from more than 7 billion. More than 78 million acres of rainforest are lost every year—215,000 acres every day, or about 150 acres every minute! Destruction of the rainforests is of sociological import because it results

from collective human behavior. The immediate cause of this destruction is to accommodate the logging, mining, and ranching industries. Although these industries benefit the peoples of those regions, they are primarily providing for the consumption demands of the more developed nations of the world (Myers and Kent 2004).

In addition to rainforests, worldwide **biodiversity** is in dangerous decline. According to a 2005 United Nations report prepared by 1,360 scientists from 95 countries, humans pose a distinct threat to thousands of other species on the planet. The report asserts that the natural rate of extinction has multiplied by as much as a thousand times within the past century. Perhaps hardest hit has been marine life, with a 90 percent decrease in the number of fish in the world's oceans. In addition, roughly 12 percent of birds, 23 percent of mammals, 25 percent of conifers, and 32 percent of amphibians are threatened with extinction. These mass die-offs are being driven by human activities, including the destruction of habitats, pollution, the introduction of nonnative species, and overuse. "We will need to make sure that we don't disrupt the biological web to the point where collapse of the whole system becomes irreversible," says Anantha Duraiappah of Canada, who cochaired the study.

PROBLEMS OF WASTE: POLLUTION Problems of consumption are linked to problems of waste, often two sides of the same coin. Consider water and air. Water is another natural resource that can be overused—we understand what happens during a drought, or when lakes, rivers, or underground aquifers are drained and then go dry. But water can also be damaged by what we put into it. And while we don't normally think of consuming air, it is an essential natural resource, and we can damage its quality and change for the worse the very atmosphere of the planet. Let's look at these examples of **pollution**.

Water is indispensable for life. Some 70 percent of the earth's surface is covered with water. Almost 97 percent of this is in oceans of saltwater, home to a vast array of sea creatures and plants. Only 1 percent of the total accounts for freshwater, found in lakes, rivers, and underground aquifers; the other 2 percent is in polar ice caps and glaciers. This is a small percentage to meet human needs—from drinking water to water for agricultural and ranching purposes. The world's water supply, both in oceans and freshwater, has been under increased threat from pollution by industrial development and population growth—mostly by allowing contaminants to enter the oceans, lakes, and rivers or to seep into underground water supplies. The sources of this pollution are many: factories dumping chemical and solid wastes, agricultural run-off of pesticides and fertilizers, human sewage and urban run-off, and toxic chemicals falling from the skies in rain.

Access to freshwater is not equal throughout the world. Most Americans can take safe drinking water for granted. Although the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** claims that the United States has one of the safest supplies of drinking water, even here more than 10 percent of water systems in the nation don't meet EPA standards (U.S. EPA 2008). In developing nations, waterborne diseases are a significant cause of disease and death. There is a definite link between water scarcity and poverty; in some African countries up to 50 percent of the population are without access to adequate water (Gleick 1998).

The atmosphere is made up of thin layers of gases surrounding the planet and making life possible. It interacts with the land, oceans, and sun to produce the earth's climate and weather. The air that we breathe is ubiquitous, so that we might not even think of it as a natural resource. But our earth's atmosphere and its ability to sustain life are at risk from pollution. Not all sources are human—for instance, volcanoes or forest fires started by lightning can emit massive clouds of smoke, ash, and debris into the atmosphere. Human activity, however, accounts for a tremendous amount of air pollution, especially emissions from factories and automobiles. The most common pollutants (carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, sulfur dioxide, and particulates such as soot, smoke, and dust) together are often referred to as **greenhouse gases**. These not only create ugly smog and haze but also are hazardous to the health of humans and other species.

The U.S. Congress passed the first Clean Air Act in 1963, which has been followed over the decades by numerous amendments and other legislation to help regulate industries involved in emissions. Regulations and technological advancements have helped reduce air pollution in the United States. Still, we have the highest per capita rate of any nation, emitting some 6.6 tons of greenhouse gases per person per year. It is estimated that over 100 million people, or about 40 percent of the U.S. population, live in areas reporting higher levels of ozone than are safe by national standards (U.S. EPA 2003). The problem may be even greater in developing nations that are rapidly becoming industrialized.

biodiversity the variety of species of plants and animals existing at any given time

pollution any environmental contaminant that harms living beings

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) a government agency organized in 1969 to "create and maintain conditions in which man and nature can exist in productive harmony"

greenhouse gases any gases in the earth's atmosphere that allow sunlight to pass through but trap heat, thus affecting temperature

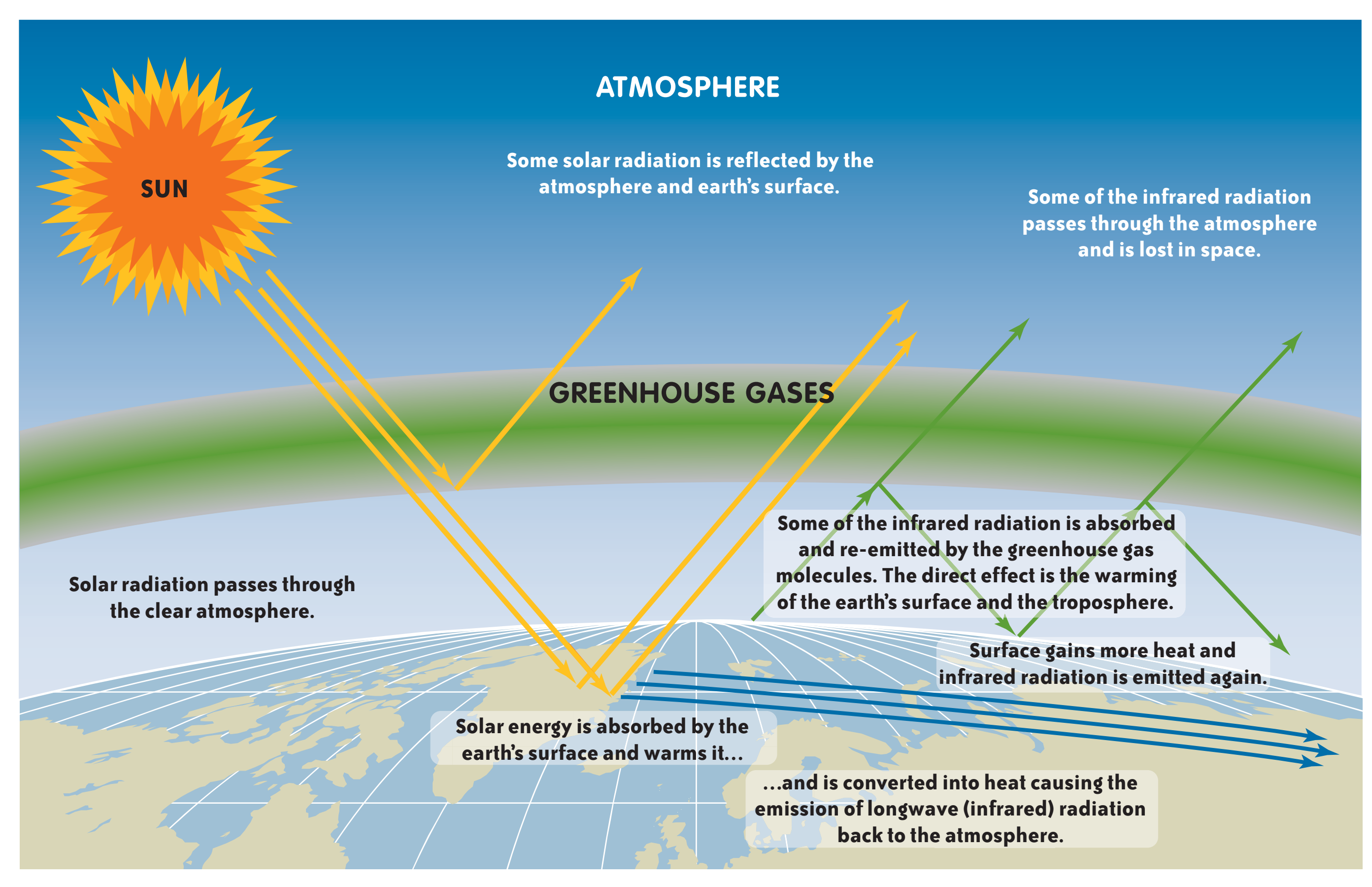


FIGURE 15.8 The Greenhouse Effect Emissions from factories and automobiles contribute to the layer of greenhouse gases that trap heat within the atmosphere.

Greenhouse gases are also contributing to a change in the makeup of the earth's atmosphere. Scientists call this the **greenhouse effect**. The earth's climate is regulated through a process in which some of the sun's heat and energy is retained within the atmosphere. Naturally occurring gases (such as water vapor or carbon dioxide) help trap some of the earth's outgoing heat, which in turn maintains a stable, livable climate. An increase in greenhouse gases from air pollution results in greater retention of heat within the earth's atmosphere, leading to **global warming**, an increase in the world's average temperature.

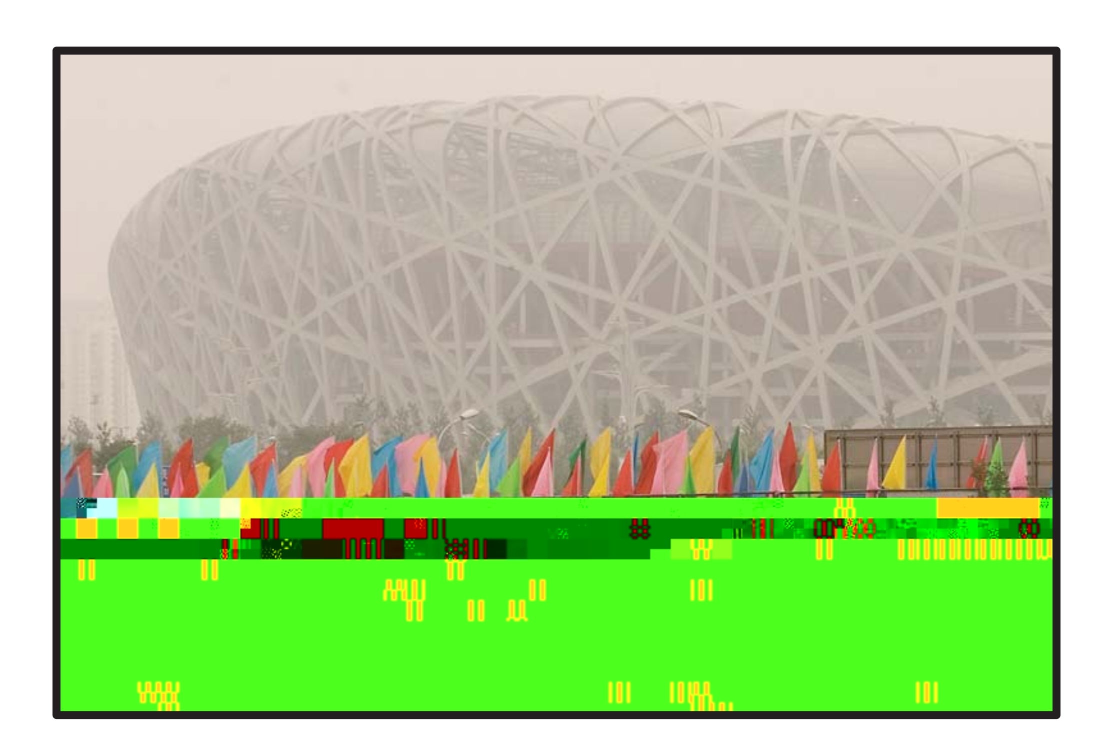
greenhouse effect the process in which increased production of greenhouse gases, especially those arising from human activity (e.g., carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane) cause the earth's temperature to rise

global warming gradual increase in the earth's temperature, driven recently by an increase in greenhouse gases and other human activity

global (or **solar**) **dimming** a decline in the amount of light reaching the earth's surface because of increased air pollution, which reflects more light back into space

Scientists believe that in the past 50 to 100 years, the average temperature of the earth has risen one degree Fahrenheit. They predict that greenhouse gases will continue to increase the earth's temperature another one to five degrees over the next 50 years, and two to ten degrees in the next 100 years (U.S. EPA 2000). A climate change of a few degrees can cause catastrophic consequences for the world and its inhabitants. Even slightly higher temperatures could melt polar ice caps and increase the sea level, shrink the landmasses of islands and continents, change global weather patterns, and alter ecosystems that support life on Earth.

In addition to the greenhouse effect, pollutants in the air have also caused **global dimming** (or **solar dimming**). This newly discovered phenomenon means that the earth is becoming darker than it used to be. Because of all the particles in the atmosphere, some natural and some from human activity, less light from the sun's rays reaches the earth. Climate researchers estimate that the earth's surface is receiving 15 percent less sunlight than it did just 50 years ago (Boyd 2004). The sun has remained as bright as always, but the amount of energy or solar radiation that hits the earth has been shrinking by about 3 percent per decade. In some



Opening Day of the Beijing Olympics Heavy pollution practically shrouds the Olympic stadium in Beijing in 2008.

respects, global dimming is counteracting global warming, but that only means that global warming would be worse were it not for the pollutants that are blocking the sun.

Another pollution problem is garbage—all the trash we throw out. U.S. waste production is twice that of any other nation. The average American generates four pounds of trash per day—1,460 pounds per year. The country dumps about 200 million tons of garbage a year, and less than 25 percent of it is recycled, leaving the rest for landfills and incinerators. Some of our trash even gets blasted into outer space (such as satellites and other objects that have become obsolete), where more than 600,000 pieces of litter are orbiting the planet! And have you ever thought about light pollution or noise pollution? Depending on your sensitivity to these, you may be dismayed not to see stars in the night sky because of so many street lights and neon signs, or be annoyed by the almost constant sound of traffic and other noise, both of which are part of life in big cities.

Environmental Sociology

To analyze problems of the environment, sociologists have developed "environmental sociology," a distinct subfield of sociology that describes environmental issues and examines the reciprocal interactions between the physical environment, social structure, and human behavior. Although this subfield is still developing, four major analytic frameworks within environmental sociology have emerged over the last 30 years. These concern the political economy of the environment, attitudes about the environment, environmental movements (including environmental justice), and sustainable development.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE ENVIRONMENT The political economy of the environment is a core area of study within environmental sociology that takes a classical or neo-Marxist and Weberian approach to understanding the environment (Schnaiberg 1975). Its focus is on how economic factors influence the way organizations (typically corporations) use the environment and how this use is often supported by political systems and policies.

Contemporary industrial societies have been built on the premise of progress—on conquering nature and using natural resources to fuel production and expand profits (Schnaiberg and Gould 1994). Government policies and economic systems have frequently supported this belief. While progress has usually meant great wealth for some and goods and services for many, it has come at a price: environmental degradation and the accompanying social problems.

Environmental sociologists refer to this process as the **treadmill of production**. They assert that the drive for economic growth in capitalist societies persists, even at

treadmill of production term describing the operation of modern economic systems that require constant growth, which causes increased exploitation of resources and environmental degradation

new ecological paradigm a way of understanding human life as just one part of an ecosystem that includes many species' interactions with the environment; suggests that there should be ecological limits on human activity

anthropocentric literally "human centered"; the idea that needs and desires of human beings should take priority over concerns about other species or the natural environment

human exemptionalism the attitude that humans are exempt from natural ecological limits

environmental movement a social movement organized around concerns about the relationship between humans and the environment

the expense of the environment and despite opposition from activists and other groups, because corporate expansion provides critical taxable wealth and the jobs essential to the economic life of a society. Although such development creates a multitude of problems, there are also serious consequences for attempts at regulating or limiting the production practices of these corporations (Schnaiberg 1975). Large corporations can typically defend themselves against calls for accountability for damages and exercise considerable influence through political lobbying and campaign contributions as well as appeals to change public opinion. Attacking the practices of these corporations can also be detrimental to the workers who need their jobs and to governments that may depend on these industries for products critical to the nation's well-being and security (Schnaiberg and Gould 1994). Even though the treadmill of production is not an environmentally friendly process, numerous societies are invested in its continued existence, and we will likely see enduring conflict between the economy and the environment at the international, national, regional, and local levels.

ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES Understanding societal attitudes about the environment is an essential part of environmental sociology. Early work in this area began with a group of Chicago School sociologists including Robert Park (1961) and Amos Hawley (1950), who helped to establish the field of human ecology. Extending on this in the 1970s, William Catton and Riley Dunlap developed the **new ecological paradigm** (Catton and Dunlap 1978, 1980).

Historically, Westerners have had a particularly **anthropocentric,** or human-centered, relationship with the environment, perceiving nature as something to master. Nature is believed to be inexhaustible and hence can be used with impunity to serve humankind. Consumption is equated with success. This is consistent with the Judeo-Christian belief in man's dominion over the earth. Western culture thus perpetuates **human exemptionalism**, an attitude that humans are exempt from natural ecological limits (Dunlap and Catton 1994). Much of our progress through industrialization supports this notion that technology will allow us to overcome any environmental challenge. In contrast, the new ecological paradigm poses humans as part of the ecosystem or biosphere, one of many species that interact with the natural environment. Nature has limits that we must respect, and this may constrain economic development. The new ecological paradigm recognizes that human activity can have both intended and unintended consequences that shape social life and life on the planet.

Scientists as well as environmental advocates and policy makers are in disagreement about the future consequences of global warming. Some argue that global warming is part of the natural progression of the earth. Others say it has been brought about primarily by human activity and that we are headed toward catastrophe. Still others argue that though global warming exists, it is not a cause for concern. How such problems as global warming are defined and understood depends on underlying values and beliefs. You might not consider global warming so bad if you also thought that extinction of some plant and animal life was an acceptable part of the evolutionary process of natural selection. Or you might not be bothered by global warming if you thought that clean air, fossil fuels, or other natural resources were commodities in a free market and that nations must compete for their availability and take responsibility for their consequences. Our definitions and interpretations of evidence regarding environmental problems are also filtered through our own cultural beliefs and values.

Research on environmental attitudes has had a marked influence on studies of environmental movements (Dunlap and Catton 1979; Buttel 1987). Environmental sociologists are interested in the processes that create attitude change and the relationship between attitudes and behavior. They want to understand why certain groups have become more "biocentric" (as opposed to anthropocentric), or more environmentally sensitive, and what inspires great numbers of people to participate in environmental movements.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT People have long been concerned about the relationship between humans and nature and about the impact of society on the environment. When people organize around these concerns, their collective efforts can have profound impacts. When sociologists study the **environmental movement**, topics of interest include the origins of the groups involved, their internal organization and social network formation, their political role, and their presence at local, regional, national, and international levels. In this section we will trace the four major eras in the history of the environmental movement in the United States while discussing major flashpoints in its development.

Most social scientists and historians date the beginning of the American environmental movement to the writings of Henry David Thoreau in the mid-1800s, especially *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods*, which concerns the rejection of urban materialism and the virtues of simple living. Thoreau has inspired many generations, and his central argument, about how humans impact the natural environment and thus must actively choose to preserve it, continues to be the backbone of environmental activism in the United States. While preservation or conservation remains a key focus, the environmental movement has become increasingly interested in how to respond to or prevent ecological disasters.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are often referred to as the **conservation era**; environmentalism in that time tended to reflect Thoreau's preservation argument. In this time, state and national parks, such as Yosemite (1864), Yellowstone (1872), and the Grand Canyon (1906), were established through legislative protection and funding. Congress approved the creation of the National Park Service in 1916 and continued to pass environmental laws to protect the wilderness and to regulate industries that impinged on it, such as mining and logging. Early environmental groups such as the Audubon Society (1886) and the Sierra Club (1892) that emphasized the conservation of wildlife and nature were also established around that time and are still in existence today.

From the mid-twentieth century on, environmentalism changed in response to several ecological disasters. For example, in 1948, in the town of Donora, Pennsylvania, 20 people died and over 7,000 others were hospitalized when industrial waste that formed concentrated smog was released into the atmosphere and settled over the town, severely compromising the air quality for its residents. Congress responded to that ecological disaster (albeit late) by passing some of the first environmental legislation of the modern era, the Air Pollution Control Act of 1955.



John Muir An early conservationist, Muir led the movement to establish national parks like Yosemite.

The second era, the **modern environmental movement**, began in the 1960s in part as a response to Rachel Carson's landmark book *Silent Spring*. Her book was an impassioned critique of the effects of pesticide use, specifically dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane, commonly known as DDT. The 1950s had witnessed an explosion of development in new chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides, often hailed as revolutionary and miraculous in the practice of agriculture. But these same chemicals harmed or killed beneficial organisms and wildlife such as songbirds (hence the title of the book). There was even speculation that they could work their way up the food chain, becoming carcinogens in humans. Although the companies manufacturing DDT and other chemicals vigorously fought such allegations, public outcry eventually led to government hearings and an EPA ban on DDT in the United States and other countries (Bailey 2002).

While there has been considerable debate about the validity of the science behind the DDT scare, it drew unprecedented public attention to environmental issues that had never been addressed before. As former vice president Al Gore explained in the foreword to the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of the book, *Silent Spring* "brought environmental issues to the attention not just of industry and government; it brought them to the public, and put our democracy itself on the side of saving the Earth." As awareness about environmental issues grew, so did the amount of environmental legislation. As a result, environmentalism was able to find credibility in American society, and its practice has become an enduring force in public policy.

Unfortunately, many other ecological disasters occurred in the decades that followed. Some of the most notable were the oil spill in Santa Barbara in 1969 (Molotch 1970) and the Exxon Valdez spill off the coast of Alaska in 1989; toxic waste in Love Canal in 1978; the nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island in 1979 and Chernobyl in 1986; and the discovery of a 30-year oil spill at the Guadalupe Dunes in California in 1994 (Beamish 2002). Each of these elicited public outrage.

conservation era earliest stage of the environmental movement, which focused on the preservation of "wilderness" areas

modern environmental movement beginning in the 1960s, the second major stage of the environmental movement; focused on the environmental consequences of new technologies, oil exploration, chemical production, and nuclear power plants



Changing the World

Julia "Butterfly" Hill

On New Year's Day, 1997, a giant mudslide destroyed seven homes in Stafford, a small town in California's Humboldt County. Heavy December rains played a role, but many were convinced that the real cause was logging that had stripped nearby slopes bare of vegetation. The Pacific Lumber Corporation owned the land and had recently clear-cut the timber from the mountain, harvesting all the significant trees from an area and using fire and herbicides to clear the area of plants that would impede the growth of "merchantable timber."

Shortly after the slide, Pacific Lumber received permission to begin clear-cutting timber on the slopes immediately around the slide. At this point Earth First!, a radical environmental group, decided to act. A reconnaissance team explored the slopes scheduled for logging and discovered that an enormous redwood known to locals as the "Stafford Giant," estimated to be between 600 and 1,000 years old, was marked to be harvested. Late one night, members of the team hiked in and built a small platform180 feet above the ground where a volunteer protestor could sit in the tree and thus prevent it from being cut down. To commemorate the moonlight by which they worked, they named the tree "Luna."

Julia Hill, in Arkansas, had worked in a restaurant until the fall of 1996, when she was seriously injured in a car accident. Ten months later, after long and intensive therapy for her injuries, she emerged with a deep-seated conviction that her life had to be about more than just a paycheck, "that our value as people is not in our stock portfolios and bank accounts but in the legacies we leave behind" (Hill 2000, p. 5). She resolved that as soon as she was well enough she wanted to find a sense of purpose, and on a visit to the California coast to see the redwoods, she found one.

She put her belongings in storage, moved to Humboldt County, and made her way to the Earth First! base camp; there she adopted her own "forest name," Butterfly, and got ready to help however she could. That chance came when organizers were looking for someone to sit in Luna for at least five days. No one could have guessed that Julia would eventually sit in Luna continuously for over two years.

Tree sitting is a rather radical form of activism. Almost all tree sits fail, because missing one day of sitting can allow the loggers to return and cut down the tree—if activists aren't forcibly removed before then. Pacific Lumber made the process as uncomfortable for Julia as possible. Foghorns and floodlights disturbed her sleep, and the company's helicopter sprayed her with rotor wash—the dust and wind kicked up underneath the helicopter (Garlington 1998). The company even tried to starve her down by preventing her support team from delivering fresh supplies.

Julia stayed on the platform. Although the tree sit started with little fanfare, the number of requests for interviews rose rapidly as the protest continued. Julia could contact the outside world with a solar-powered radio phone. Her supporters built an official website and set up a media office to field local, national, and international inquiries. Musicians Bonnie Raitt and Joan Baez played at a rally for Luna, and actor Woody Harrelson even stayed in the tree overnight, joining the protest (Hill 2000).

mainstream environmentalism beginning in the 1980s, the third major stage of the environmental movement; characterized by increasing organization, well-crafted promotional campaigns, sophisticated political tactics, and an increasing reliance on economic and scientific expertise

Through a series of amendments and executive orders, the EPA was given broader powers that included the means to investigate ecological crises, organize cleanups, punish offenders, establish further regulations, and research environmentally friendly technologies.

The third era of the environmental movement, referred to as **mainstream environmentalism**, began in the 1980s. It emerged, in part, as a response to the Reagan administration's anti-environmental deregulation policies. National and international environmental organizations, such as the Sierra Club or Greenpeace as well as other watchdog groups, were becoming increasingly institutionalized. They began using well-crafted promotional campaigns and sophisticated political tactics to gain the attention of legislators and secure victories in their ongoing battles. Mainstream

Eventually the group's tactics and Hill's perseverance paid off. By putting a human face on the struggle to save the forests, public pressure mounted on Pacific Lumber to reach a settlement that preserved Luna. On December 18, 1999, a little more than two years after Julia began her treetop residency, a deed of covenant was signed that protected Luna and a 200-foot buffer zone around it in perpetuity. Despite a serious attack by vandals almost a year later, the tree is still standing today.

Of course, this wasn't the end of the story for Hill. She established the Circle of Life Foundation, with the stated goal of "inspiring, supporting and networking individuals, organizations and communities to create environmental solutions with respect for the interconnectedness of all life" (Shakara 2004). Hill's second book, *One Makes the Difference: Inspiring Actions That Change Our World* (2002), claims that any individual can and should make a difference. The book opens with a quote from Bette Reese: "If you think you're too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito."



Julia "Butterfly" Hill The environmental activist perches near the top of Luna, a 200-foot redwood tree.

environmentalism evolved into a cluster of public interest groups, many of which had their own political action committees, or PACs, to lobby for positive legislative change. In addition to legal expertise, they developed economic and scientific expertise to support research, generate grants, and acquire land for preservation.

A link between the modern era and the mainstream era of environmentalism is **Earth Day**. The original event was conceived of by environmental activist and then-Senator Gaylord Nelson as both a "teach-in" and a protest gathering to express concerns about environmental issues. In the first Earth Day, celebrated on March 22, 1970, 20 million people participated. Earth Day is still celebrated nationally and internationally. Typically it includes a variety of groups—environmentally friendly businesses, nonprofit organizations, local government agencies, and others—teaching people about

Earth Day a holiday conceived of by environmental activist and Senator Gaylord Nelson to encourage support for and increase awareness of environmental concerns; first celebrated on March 22, 1970



The 1969 Oil Spill in Santa Barbara Workers rake hay along a Southern California beach in an effort to protect the coast from more than 200,000 gallons of oil that leaked into the sea when an off-shore oil rig broke.

ways to help the environment while celebrating their relationship to it.

A fourth era of the environmental movement representing grassroots efforts emerged after criticism that although mainstream environmental organizations were serving important functions in the overall effort, they were too accommodating to industry and government. **Grassroots environmentalism** is distinguished from mainstream environmentalism by its belief in citizen participation in environmental decision making. Its focus is often regional or local, and it can include both urban and rural areas. Grassroots groups are often less formally organized than their mainstream counterparts, and in some instances this frees embers from ineffective bureaucratic structures as they fight for issues of great importance to them. Grassroots environmentalism draws on a variety of ideologies, including feminist, native, and spiritual ecologies, and cuts across ethnic, racial, and class lines.

grassroots environmentalism fourth major stage of the environmental movement; distinguished by the diversity of its members and belief in citizen participation in environmental decision making

NIMBY short for "Not in My Back Yard"; originally referred to protests that aimed at shifting undesirable activities onto those with less power; now sometimes used without negative connotations to describe local environmental activists

Green Party a U.S. political party established in 1984 to bring political attention to environmentalism, social justice, diversity, and related principles

NIMBY, which stands for "Not in My Back Yard," was originally a derogatory term applied to those who complained about any kind of undesirable activity in their neighborhoods that would threaten their own health or local environment but were not concerned if it happened to people somewhere else. Now the term *NIMBY* has been appropriated by the environmental movement for the people "somewhere else" who are fighting against environmental degradation on their home turf, often without significant resources, to protect their families and surrounding communities. Sometimes it makes sense to wage battles at the local level where the problems are readily apparent and the approaches to solving them more tangible. And of course if people everywhere were willing to fight in this way, then antienvironmental corporations would have to change their practices or be forced out of all possible locations.

Another expression of grassroots environmentalism is the **Green Party**. Established in 1984, the basic Green Party platform of ten principles includes a commitment to environmentalism, social justice, decentralization, community-based economics, feminism, and diversity. The environmental goal is a sustainable world in which nature and human society coexist in harmony. The Green Party seeks to be an alternative voice in political and policy debates that often challenges the mainstream Republican and Democratic parties and rejects corporate backing. They would like to see the political process returned to the people. Candidates from the Green Party have been elected to various political seats at the local and state levels, and Ralph Nader, a longtime



Ecoterrorism To protest logging, wild horse roundups, genetic engineering of plants, SUV sales, and the expansion of the Rocky Mountain resort town of Vail, Colorado, ecoterrorists firebombed this mountain lodge restaurant and other buildings in the Northwest.

consumer protection advocate, was its candidate in the presidential election of 2000, garnering enough votes to have perhaps changed the outcome of that election.

Ecoterrorism is an example of radical grassroots environmentalism. Ecoterrorists (or ecoextremists) use violent and often criminal methods to achieve their goals of protecting the environment. These groups operate underground, without centralized organization or known membership. Their tactics include arson, explosives, vandalism, theft, sabotage, and harassment, called by law enforcement officials "direct action" campaigns to disrupt or destroy businesses and organizations they believe are a threat to the environment. They have so far avoided targeting people, though there may be victims in the course of ecoterrorist operations. FBI counterterrorism agents recently told a Senate committee that radical environmental and animal rights activists represented the nation's top domestic terrorist threat (Heilprin 2005).

It is unclear how many ecoterrorist groups currently exist in the United States, Canada, England, and elsewhere. One visible group calls itself the Earth Liberation Front, or ELF, and claims to have originated in 1977 near Santa Cruz, California. Although it disavows any connection to illegal activity, the ELF acknowledges that some individuals have used its name to claim responsibility for their actions. The ELF says that those individuals have acted on their own without ELF's direction or endorsement. Targets are often chosen for their symbolic nature and have included logging operations, sport-utility-vehicle dealerships, recreational resorts, and new home and condominium developments.

The **environmental justice** (or "ecojustice") movement represents a significant branch of the environmental movement and is also an example of grassroots organization. It emerged as a response to environmental inequities, threats to public health, and the differential enforcement and treatment of certain communities with regard to ecological concerns. Despite significant improvements in environmental protections, millions of people in the United States live in communities threatened by ecological hazards. The poor and minorities are disproportionately at risk and bear a greater portion of the nation's environmental problems. The term **environmental racism** is applied when an environmental policy or practice negatively affects individuals, groups, or communities based on race

ecoterrorism use of violence or criminal methods to protect the environment, often in high-profile, publicity-generating ways

environmental justice a movement that aims to remedy environmental inequities such as threats to public health and the unequal treatment of certain communities with regard to ecological concerns

environmental racism any environmental policy or practice that negatively affects individuals, groups, or communities because of their race or ethnicity

or color (Bullard 1993). Access to environmental equality, or living in a healthy environment, has been framed as a basic human right.

Research on environmental justice is one of the fastest growing areas of scholarship within environmental sociology. Sociologist Robert Bullard is among the leading researchers in this area, linking social justice to environmental movements. His book *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Bullard 1990) examined the economic, social, and psychological impacts associated with locating noxious facilities (such as landfills, hazardous-waste dumps, and lead smelters) within lower-income African American communities where they have been less likely to meet with significant opposition.

Blacks have historically been underrepresented in the environmental movement. Often they were already engaged in other civil rights causes that seemed more pressing. They also lacked the experience and money to fight large corporations, and many had little hope of change, even though they strongly opposed environmental destruction, especially the kinds found in their communities. However, some groups have been moved to action.

Bullard looked at five black communities in the South that challenged public policies and industrial practices threatening their neighborhoods. After years of environmental problems, these activists began to demand environmental justice and equal protection. They grew increasingly incensed at the industries and the government regulatory agencies that allowed those industries to violate codes and continue polluting. The industries, though heavy polluters, had often gained favor in the communities by promising a better tax base and much-needed jobs. Real environmental justice, however, would mean that communities could enjoy jobs and economic development but not at the expense of their health and the environment. That is just what they achieved.

Work by Bullard and others in the field of environmental justice has had profound impacts not only on academia but also on public policy, industry practices, and community organizations. Environmental justice groups are beginning to sway administrative decisions and have won several important court victories (Bullard and Wright 1990; Kaczor 1996; Bullard, Johnson, and Wright 1997). The EPA was even convinced to create an Office on Environmental Equity. There is still much work to be done in this area. Some of the most important battles in the environmental justice movement will be fought beyond the U.S. borders, in other countries suffering from similar and even worse environmental problems.

sustainable development economic development that aims to reconcile global economic growth with environmental protection

ecological footprint an estimation of the land and water area required to produce all the goods an individual consumes and to assimilate all the wastes he or she generates

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT The study of **sustainable development** is among the most recent areas of environmental sociology, having emerged in the 1990s, and it continues to generate some controversy (McMichael 1996). The idea of sustainable development was popularized in a United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development report entitled "Our Common Future," often referred to as the Brundtland Report (1987). Sustainable development is a broad concept that tries to reconcile global economic development with environmental protection; it is based on the premise that the development aspirations of all countries cannot be met by following the path already taken by industrialized nations because the world's ecosystems cannot support it. Yet since improving the conditions of the world's poor is an international goal, we must find ways of promoting economic growth that both respect social justice and protect the environment, not only in the present but for future generations (Humphrey, Lewis, and Buttel 2002; Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003).

One way to grasp the magnitude of supporting humans on the planet is the **ecological footprint**, an estimation of how much land and water area is required to produce all the goods we consume and to assimilate all the wastes we generate. The current ecological footprint of the average American, approximately 30 acres, represents about three times her or his fair share of the earth's resources (Wackernagel and Rees 1996). Compare that to someone from the United Kingdom, whose ecological footprint is approximately 15 acres, or someone from Burundi with a little over one acre (People and the Planet 2002). Modern industrialized countries are appropriating the carrying capacity of "land vastly larger than the areas they physically occupy" (Rees and Wackernagel 1994). Projections are that we would need four additional planet Earths to support the world's population if everyone else were to adopt the consumption habits of Americans. (You can measure your own ecological footprint by following the link listed in "Suggestions for Further Exploration" at the end of this chapter.)

Working toward sustainable development is a challenge. We have to find ways to meet the needs of a growing world population—for food, shelter, health care, education, and employment—while ensuring that we sustain nature and the environment, whether that is fresh water, clean air, natural resources, nontoxic communities, or the protection of wildlife. Often these goals are posed as adversaries. It is even more important to work toward sustainable development as we become increasingly globalized and have to think about

the rest of the world and far into the future (Holdren, Daily, and Ehrlich 1995).

Some solutions toward sustainable development are already being implemented. These include lifestyle modifications—engaging in voluntary simplicity, recycling, vegetarianism and veganism, buying organic foods, and using goods or services from environmentally friendly and fair trade companies. Others are modifications to our infrastructure, such as green building, ecological design, xeriscape (water-conserving) gardening, and land conservation. Technological changes can be made in the way we use energy—from hybrid or biodiesel cars to solar power. Some state and local governments are enforcing higher environmental standards and regulations than those imposed at the federal level. In 2005 more than 160 U.S. mayors signed on to an urban anti–global warming agreement that some call the "municipal Kyoto" in reference to the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty on global climate change that the United States has declined to ratify (Caplan 2005). All these efforts help move us toward sustainable development, but much more must be done if we are to create that vision for the future.

Closing Comments

In this chapter we have crossed a huge terrain—from population through urbanization to the environment. We hope that you can now see the connection among these three seemingly disparate areas of study. Human population has grown over history, particularly in the last 200 years. The rate at which the population increases is influenced by both biological and social factors. Where all these people live has also changed over time. As more of them locate in cities, cities play a key role in how we inhabit the world and what kind of world that becomes. The billions of people inhabiting the planet are part of an ecosystem, and they continue to have an impact on it. The natural environment both affects and is affected by human activity. So population, urbanization, and the environment are intimately related. There is a mutual effect and interdependence between them, where trends and changes in one reverberate through the others. As residents of planet Earth, we all take part in the dynamic, both enjoying or suffering current realities and creating future ones.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **Demography** Demographics—statistical descriptions of populations in terms of birth rate, mortality rate, and migration—are used to analyze the movements of entire populations as well as smaller groups within a population. Demographers also attempt to predict population changes and their consequences. Historically, the most important debate among demographers has involved the theories of Thomas Malthus. The Neo-Malthusians believe that population growth will eventually outpace available resources and lead to a global catastrophe, while the Anti-Malthusians believe that family planning and other changes wrought by industrialization will eventually cause population shrinkage.
- **Urbanization** One of the most important recent demographic changes is the population shift from rural areas to cities, such that 83 percent of Americans now live in cities. The growth of cities created new problems including noise, pollution, overcrowding, alienation, and the diffusion of responsibility. In the 1950s and 60s, many who could afford to leave the cities moved to the suburbs, where urban sprawl created its own set of problems including racial segregation, conformity, and long commutes. Urban legends often capture fears and anxieties about the problems of city life.
- **Social Ecology** Sociologists are interested in social ecology, or the relationships between a social group and its physical environment, especially as environmental degradation has increasingly become a social problem. Modern, industrial societies create environmental problems as greater production and consumption deplete resources and cause pollution. Ever-increasing demands for energy have spurred use of nonrenewable resources, and this use often generates pollution. As more of the world industrializes, consumes more energy, and produces more pollution, these problems will intensify.
- **Environmental Sociology** Environmental sociology analyzes the relationships among the environment, social structure, and human behavior, focusing on four

areas: the political economy of the environment, environmental attitudes, the environmental movement, and sustainable development. The political economy of the environment is concerned with how economic factors influence the exploitation of natural resources. Capitalism demands constant growth, creating a treadmill of production. Governments rely on the taxes generated by growth, and most individuals need the jobs this growth supports—but this growth can also have widespread environmental consequences.

- Some who are concerned with the relationship between humans and the natural world join the environmental movement. Its first efforts in the nineteenth century focused on conservation of wilderness areas. The modern environmental movement arose in the mid-twentieth century in response to ecological disasters that threaten public health and safety. Mainstream environmentalism grew in the 1980s as the movement consolidated, organized, and increasingly lobbied government about environmental concerns. In the movement's most recent stage, grassroots environmentalism has emerged in response to perceived blind spots in the larger mainstream groups. Grassroots organizers focused on local action and community involvement.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. How many children would you like to have? The demographic predictions of the Neo-Malthusians and the Anti-Malthusians disagree sharply. According to the Anti-Malthusians, what changes in social structure might make people less interested in having lots of children?
2. This chapter described Americans as "pigs of the planet," in reference to the way we consume resources. Make a list of all the ways you use water other than for drinking. Do you believe that the planet can continue to support the kind of consumption and waste of the American standard of living? What do you think will happen when growing populations in developing nations want to live like Americans?
3. Do you prefer to live in a dense urban area, or a more lightly populated suburban one? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? What sorts of social and/or environmental problems are created by the situation you prefer?
4. The chapter describes the social problems associated with the environment in terms of consumption and waste. How are these two types of social problems connected? Describe one thing you've consumed today in terms of the pollution that can be directly linked to it.
5. What is the difference between an anthropocentric point of view and the new ecological paradigm? How do these ways of understanding the relationship between human beings and the natural world relate to the social construction of environmental problems?
6. Today the environmental movement is much more diverse than when it began in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Although few would object outright to national parks, what sort of criticisms might those concerned with environmental racism have for conservationists?
7. In the past, NIMBY has been used as a derogatory term, but grassroots environmental activists have reclaimed it as a positive one. When does "not in my backyard" become a worthwhile resistance strategy?
8. Mainstream environmental activism focused on influencing government. Grassroots environmentalism often stresses the importance of direct action, like that of Julia "Butterfly" Hill, who stayed in a redwood tree for two years to keep it from being cut down. Pick a contemporary environmental problem and describe how you would attempt to remedy it if you belonged to a mainstream environmental organization. How would you approach it differently as a member of a grassroots organization?
9. How and why is it helpful to consider the environment and urbanization as related issues? Specifically, think about the issues associated with internal migration. Describe how internal migration within the United States affects three of the environmental problems described in this chapter.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Climate Challenge (www.bbc.co.uk/sn/hottopics/climatechange/ climate_challenge). A free online video game that puts the earth's future in your hands. As the president of the European nations, you must tackle climate change while remaining popular enough with voters to stay in office.

Released in 2007, the game uses carbon dioxide emission forecasts produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Davis, Mike. 1999. *Ecology of Fear*. New York: Vintage. A case study in social ecology, examining the impact of the city of Los Angeles on the natural world and the ways that its residents have been affected by local ecology. Wildfires, mudslides, and mountain lions may seem to be purely natural, but as Davis illustrates, they are closely connected to social forces.

Ecological Footprint Quiz (www.earthday.net/footprint). This quiz allows you to estimate how much productive land and water you need to support what you use and what you discard. After answering 15 simple questions, you can compare your ecological footprint to those of others and to the planet's available resources.

Erickson, Kai. 1995. *A New Species of Trouble*. New York: W. W. Norton. A sociological investigation of disasters caused by human beings. Erickson argues that the social disruptions caused by pollution, poisoned groundwater, nuclear waste, and other troubles cause the same sort of trauma as natural disasters and should be treated as such.

Hawken, Paul, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins. 2000. *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*. Boston: Back Bay Books. A controversial look at "natural capitalism," which the authors believe can be simultaneously good for business and good for the environment, primarily through closer attention to waste and energy use.

An Inconvenient Truth. 2006. Dir. Davis Guggenheim. Paramount. A documentary featuring former vice president Al Gore. This is an in-depth discussion of global warming and its potential consequences on weather, biodiversity, disease, and sea level. The film echoes the concerns of those who study the political economy of the environment.

Into the Wild. 2007. Dir. Sean Penn. Paramount Vantage. A retelling of the story of Chris McCandless based on Jon Krakauer's book of the same name. This film addresses the relationship between the social world and the natural world by chronicling McCandless's travels and his shifting allegiances to nature, himself, and his society.

Kolbert, Elizabeth. 2006. *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*. New York: Bloomsbury. An accessible overview of the linkages between human action and climate change, with chapters covering specific case studies from the melting glaciers of the arctic to conservation efforts in Burlington, Vermont.

Leopold, Aldo. 1949. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press. A classic collection of essays on nature and conservation written while the author observed the changing seasons on his Wisconsin farm. Leopold, who began his career as a forest ranger, called for the development of a "land ethic" that would not use economic growth as the sole measure of the worth of the natural world.

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The Meatrix (www.themeatrix.com). A short online animation that describes the effects of factory farms including negative impacts on animal welfare, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, pollution, and destroyed communities.

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CHAPTER 16

Social Change: Looking Toward Tomorrow

If you haven't seen one already, ask your parents (or maybe one of your professors) to show you the scar from their smallpox vaccination. It's a dime-sized circle that was made with multiple pricks of a tiny fork-like needle that held one drop of vaccine, and it would now be almost invisible as it sits at the top of their left arm. This little scar protects your parents and professors from a disease that has killed billions of people and left billions more blind and disfigured, for which there is no effective treatment. Yet if you check your own arm, you will see that you do *not* have a similar scar; you are not protected from smallpox. Why not?

Smallpox is one of the diseases that have been effectively eliminated by the advances of medical technology. Scientific discoveries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries meant that by the middle of the twentieth century, a global campaign to stamp out the disease was well underway. The last natural case of smallpox in the world occurred in Somalia in 1977, and a lab accident killed a British researcher in 1978. But since then, no one has contracted the disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared smallpox officially eradicated in 1979, and vaccinations were discontinued worldwide by 1986.

Does the WHO declaration mean that smallpox virus no longer exists? No—two high-security research labs, one in the United States and one in Russia, hold samples of the virus, and another lab in the Netherlands houses the seed virus used to produce the vaccine. Why keep samples of a vanquished virus? If it ever reappears, if even the smallest amount somehow escapes laboratory quarantine, an epidemic is almost certain: smallpox is transmitted through face-to-face contact before individuals even know they are infected, and it can also be spread through building ventilation systems. It will thus be critical for us to have stores of the virus ready so that more vaccines can be made. The fact that large portions of the world's population—including you—are unprotected makes us vulnerable to the use of smallpox as a biological weapon. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, U.S. health officials began considering reinstituting mass vaccination programs (although at this date they have not yet done so).

The story of smallpox is a story of social change—change in the incidence, experience, and meaning of smallpox over time. The disease was a ubiquitous killer for thousands of years, up to the 1940s; in some cultures, families waited to name babies until after they had contracted and survived smallpox. It killed peasants and royalty alike, but through deliberate human effort a defense against the disease was eventually

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Then and Now

1983: Motorola introduces the first portable phones on the market, nicknamed "bricks" because of their size; each one weighs over a pound and costs $3,500.

2008: The Motorola RAZR2 weighs just over 4 ounces and costs nothing with a phone service contract. It features two full-color displays, long-range Bluetooth, voice-activated dialing, a digital and video camera, GPS system, high-speed wireless internet service, e-mail, text-messaging, and video games.

Here and There

United States: In July and August 2004, at the Democratic and Republican conventions, 5,459 people join text-messaging lists from TXTmob.com to coordinate protests in Boston and New York; on their cell phones they exchange 1,757 messages among 322 "mobs."

Kuwait: In March 2005, 400–600 women rally to win the right to vote. Using cell phones and text-messaging to coordinate the protest, organizers are able to attract the largest group of demonstrators in Kuwaiti history. Their efforts succeed: the following May, Kuwaiti lawmakers grant full political rights to all women.

This and That

Capitalizing on the musical ringtone fad, the mobile musical company Zed earned millions in 2008 from sales of Lil Wayne's "Lollipop" ringtone, the most commercially successful ringtone of the year.

Total sales of ringtones peaked in 2006 at $600 million, before more fans began downloading ringtones for free.

developed. Medicine, politics, culture, demography, individual and collective actions—smallpox was conquered through the synergy of all these elements. In the late 1700s, for example, English physician Edward Jenner observed a pattern of smallpox immunity in milkmaids who had previously contracted the less virulent cowpox, and he developed the first vaccine. Beginning in the 1950s, the WHO sought political and financial support for a worldwide vaccination campaign. Your grandparents obeyed the law and took your parents to be vaccinated when they were children. All of these processes contributed to change in the meaning and incidence of smallpox. And the meaning may change yet again as a result of the actions of another group: international terrorists. So perhaps no disease can ever truly be eradicated—ironically, it is our lingering fear of smallpox that means we must keep it with us in some form.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

There are a couple of reasons why we are ending this book with a chapter on social change. The first is that, to paraphrase an old cliché, change is the only constant. It is happening everywhere, all the time, in myriad variations. One of your challenges after reading this chapter will be to identify some of these social changes and to understand their patterns, causes, and consequences.

The other reason is more personal: we hope that reading this chapter will motivate you to work for social change yourself. The study of sociology can sometimes be a bit disheartening, as we learn the many ways in which our lives are constrained by social forces and institutional structures. But this chapter helps us remember that C. Wright Mills's "intersection of biography and history" is a two-way street: while society shapes the individual, the individual can shape society. You have the power to bring about social change, especially when you work together with others who share your views, values, and visions for a better world. So we want you to read this chapter with optimism; by understanding the processes of social change, you will be better qualified to make it happen yourself.

What Is Social Change?

No doubt you've heard your parents, grandparents, or other older family members reflect on "the way things were" when they were children. Hard-to-imagine times such as those before indoor plumbing or television, or during the Great Depression or World War II, undeniably made their lives very different from your own. People born even one generation apart can have different overall life experiences as a result of ongoing processes of social change. Consider how different life might be for American children growing up in the immediate aftermath of the tragedies of September 11, 2001, or for those who have never known a time without cell phones and the Internet. Our culture evolves over time, as do our social institutions—the family, work, religion, education, and political systems. Sociologists define the transformation of culture over time as **social change**.

social change the transformation of a culture over time

It's easy to identify particular historical periods where major social transformation was unmistakable: the Renaissance, the French Revolution, the Civil War, the women's rights movement. But it's important to realize that social change is occurring at all times, not just at moments of obvious cultural or political upheaval. The rate at which it happens, however, varies over time, with some historical periods experiencing rapid social change and others experiencing more gradual change. For example, social scientists recognize several major "social revolutions"—periods of time during which large-scale social change took place so rapidly that the whole of human society was dramatically redefined. The Agricultural Revolution made it possible for previously nomadic peoples to settle in one place, store surplus food for future use, and sustain larger populations with the products of their farms, herds, and flocks. The Industrial Revolution altered the way people worked, produced, and consumed goods and lived together in cities. And the Information Revolution (which is ongoing in Western countries) saw the advent of computer and internet technology and a profound shift from economies based on manufacturing to economies based on information technologies (Castells 2000).

In addition to the pace, other elements of social change vary as well: some changes are deliberate or intended, while others are unplanned or unintentional. For example, the invention of the automobile brought about intended changes—like the ability to travel greater distances more efficiently—yet it also brought about unforeseen events, such as the pollution of the atmosphere and the deaths of over 50,000 people every year in car accidents. Some social changes are more controversial than others (the racial integration of public schools, for example, versus salsa's overtaking ketchup as America's top condiment) and some are more important than others. Most fashion trends have little lasting impact—remember the fingerless lace gloves of the 1980s? We thought not. But some—like pants for women, miniskirts, and the bikini—are extremely influential in their impact on gender roles in society.

So society is always changing, and the rates, intentionality, controversy, and importance of individual changes vary. But how does social change occur? One way is through a major physical event: tornadoes, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions can radically alter the structures and cultures of the communities they strike. Demographic factors also come into play—for instance, as the baby boomers have aged, American society has had to build schools and colleges (in the 1950s and 60s), suburbs (in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s), and retirement facilities (in the 2000s) to accommodate this huge population bulge. Another source of social change lies in discoveries and innovations, such as fire or the wheel. Try to imagine what your life would be like if humans had not figured out how to generate light and heat by striking sparks into kindling.

Social change is often the result of such human action. Jonas Salk, for example, developed a cure for polio, and Helen Keller overcame her own handicaps to advocate for the rights of the disabled. But our most important contributions to social change are made through collective action: the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr., for example, fundamentally reshaped American society. For this reason, we will spend a good portion of this chapter examining collective behavior in its many variations.

collective behavior behavior that follows from the formation of a group or crowd of people who take action together toward a shared goal

contagion theory one of the earliest theories of collective action; suggested that individuals who joined a crowd or mob became "infected" by a mob mentality and lost the ability to reason

Collective Behavior

When we join a group, we don't disappear as individuals. But we do tend to act differently in groups than we might alone. **Collective behavior** occurs when individuals converge, thus creating a group or crowd, and embark on some sort of action. While crowds gather for different purposes and may seem disorderly, collective behavior theories suggest that such occurrences are often organized and do maintain a certain amount of order.

One of the first theories to focus on collective behavior was the **contagion theory** (Le Bon 1896), which suggested



What Are the Sources of Social Change? Disasters such as the wildfires that swept across Australia in 2009 can radically change the structures and cultures of the communities they destroy.

emergent norm theory a theory of collective behavior that assumes individual members of a crowd make their own decisions about behavior and that norms are created through others' acceptance or rejection of these behaviors

crowd a temporary gathering of individuals, whether spontaneous or planned, who share a common focus

that when people come together, a unified crowd or mob mentality results. Contagion theorists likened such groups to herds of animals, where individuality and rational thought disappear and the external stimulus of the collective action takes over. So, in the case of rampaging soccer hooligans, contagion theory would argue that these fans have given their rational thought over to a mob impulse and can no longer make individual decisions about their actions. But while the theory may seem useful when looking at cases like hooliganism, it doesn't fully explain the wide range of collective behavior beyond the "mindless mob."

A more recent idea gives us a better understanding. **Emergent norm theory** (Turner and Killian 1987) argues that collective behavior is not as uniform as Le Bon suggests and that there are any number of factors that motivate people to participate in crowd activities. The underlying assumption here is that a group is guided by norms (shared cultural expectations for behavior) that emerge in response to a situation, and as a result, the behavior of those in the crowd is structured to fit within the collective action. So while it may appear that a crowd is one large, indistinguishable mass, the individuals who make it up can have varying understandings of what their roles are within the crowd as well as the meaning of their actions.

Collective behavior generally takes three different forms: crowd behavior, mass behavior, and social movements. While these three types are discussed separately here, they are not mutually exclusive. In the real world, they may overlap whenever collective behavior actually occurs.

Crowd Behavior

A **crowd** is formed when a large number of people come together, either on purpose or randomly. If you have ever strolled around a large city, you may have noticed a street performer (such as a mime) trying to entertain people as they walk by. In time, a crowd starts to develop. So despite the fact that those who are stopping to watch had different reasons to be walking down that street at that particular time, they have now become part of a crowd whose purpose is to be an audience for a street performer. As a crowd, they must adjust their behavior somewhat: perhaps they put away their cell phones so as not to disturb the performer or those around them, and they clap at the end of the performance. Even with this conformity of behavior, however, the fact remains that



"I Predict a Riot" While the majority of the people at the WTO protest in Seattle were peaceful, a small group started some violence and looting that led the Seattle police and National Guard to declare a state of emergency. They issued curfews and even shot rubber bullets and tear gas at innocent, nonviolent protestors.

the individual motivation for joining the onlookers may vary. One person may have stopped because he was struck by the performer's talent, another because her feet hurt from walking. At a certain point, others may pause simply because they see the existing crowd and are curious.

While the street performer type of crowd comes about in a somewhat random way and doesn't yield any demonstrative action, other types of crowds form in a more deliberate manner and lead to highly expressive action. Two examples took place in 1999: a concert in Woodstock, New York, and protests at the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle.

"Woodstock 1999" was the second rock concert (a previous one occurred in 1994) that attempted to emulate the success of the original Woodstock concert of 1969. Around 200,000 attended the three-day event. Like its 1969 predecessor, Woodstock 1999 was supposed to be both a culture-shaping event and financial success; however, it failed on both counts because of poor security, high prices ($150 for a ticket and $4 for a bottle of water), and lack of sanitation. With such tenuous conditions, the crowd began to vent their frustration on the evening of the last day by tearing down and burning fences, breaking into ATM machines, and looting vendor booths and setting them afire. Such action was characterized as a **riot**: a group of people engaged in disorderly behavior directed toward other people and/or property that results in disturbing the peace.

The Seattle protests led to riots on a larger scale. While protests against the WTO are part of an ongoing and larger social movement against current forms of globalization, much attention has been paid to the 1999 meeting in Seattle, where crowds numbering 50,000 to 100,000 gathered to protest. Protesters came from all over the world and included human rights groups, students, environmental groups, religious leaders, and labor rights activists, all seeking fairer trade with less exploitation. While the majority were peaceful, a small group became violent and began looting, leading the Seattle police and National Guard to declare a state of emergency. This was followed by the issuing of curfews, arresting, tear-gassing, pepper spraying, and even shooting rubber bullets at nonviolent protesters. The riots that ensued were an incredibly significant moment in the history of popular protests. People from diverse constituencies that represented a wide range of interests had succeeded in coming together and disrupting the meetings of the world's most influential trade-governing bodies.

Both Woodstock 1999 and the Seattle WTO protests demonstrate how collective behavior can develop into riots. Furthermore, we can see in these two events how collective behavior can be both organized and chaotic, depending on the shared norms that emerge (McPhail 1991).

Mass Behavior

Mass behavior occurs when large groups of people not necessarily in the same geographical location engage in similar behavior. Mass behavior can range from buying a certain type of jeans or getting a tattoo to bidding on eBay. Sociologists have focused on three areas of mass behavior in particular. Two, fads and fashions, should be familiar to you. The third too often goes unrecognized by those involved: social dilemmas.

riot continuous disorderly behavior by a group of people that disturbs the peace and is directed toward other people and/or property

mass behavior large groups of people engaging in similar behaviors without necessarily being in the same place

fads interests or practices followed enthusiastically for a relatively short period of time

fashion the widespread custom or style of behavior and appearance at a particular time or in a particular place

FADS AND FASHIONS **Fads** are interests that are followed with great enthusiasm for a period of time. They can include products (such as Razor scooters or iPods), words or phrases ("random" or "Don't go there"), clothing styles (head bands or Ugg boots), activities (Wii fit or text-messaging) or even pets (purse-sized toy dogs or anything mixed with a poodle, e.g., a labradoodle). For fads to continue for any length of time, social networks are necessary to spread the enthusiasm (Aguirre, Quarantelli, and Mendoza 1988). While fads tend not to result in lasting social change, they do follow certain social norms and can create a unified identity for those who practice them. Dieting is a good example. Many Americans have followed such fad diets of the past as the all-grapefruit or all–white-food diet, and in recent years many have joined the low-carbohydrate fad of the Atkins and South Beach diets. During their heyday in the mid-2000s, the low-carbohydrate diets in particular had an impact on food industries, with grocery stores and fast-food chains trying to cater to the needs of their customers. Now those same low-carb products take up less shelf space, and it may be harder to find a "bunless" burger on the menu. Whatever comes next, it is likely that in wealthy countries like the United States, diet fads are sure to continue.

Another type of mass behavior is **fashion**: a widespread style of behavior and appearance. Fashion can mark you as belonging to a certain group: military fatigues and school uniforms are two examples. Like fads, certain fashions (such as extremely baggy clothes for boys and miniskirts for girls) can enjoy a huge popularity for a time. Celebrities can also drive fashion. The reality-TV show *The Hills* became popular not only for its risqué content but also for the trend-setting outfits that both the women and men wore. Similarly, *Gossip Girl*

social dilemma a situation in which behavior that is rational for the individual can, when practiced by many people, lead to collective disaster

tragedy of the commons a particular type of social dilemma in which many individuals' overexploitation of a public resource depletes or degrades that resource

has been as closely watched for its shifting romantic relationships as for the New York designer label clothing worn by its high school stars. Ironically, both shows have featured major characters who worked in fashion design. Furthermore, the real life stars of both shows are also closely followed in the tabloids and fashion magazines, where fans like to critique or emulate their styles, both onscreen and off.

SOCIAL DILEMMAS In the third category of mass behavior, called a **social dilemma**, behavior that is rational for an individual can lead to collective disaster. Let's take an example that's familiar to everyone: getting stuck in a traffic jam. You creep along slowly for what seems like forever and finally arrive at the source of the holdup. It's an accident, with two cars, a police car, and an ambulance pulled over to the shoulder. But the accident isn't even on your side of the freeway; it's on the other side, and there's nothing blocking your lanes of traffic. The holdup on your side is a result of everybody slowing down to get a good look. If they had just kept on driving at their normal speed, you wouldn't have had a traffic jam. So what do you do when you finally get up to the scene of the accident? You slow down and take a look too.

When many people make that same (seemingly) rational decision (to slow down for only a few seconds), the cumulative effect causes a kind of collective disaster (a traffic jam). As social beings, we deal with such situations almost daily, yet rarely do we see how best to handle them. According to many social thinkers, going all the way back to philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), we live in a world governed by self-interest. How is our self-interest balanced with the interests of the collective? Social dilemmas help us understand this calculation.

There are two classes of social dilemmas. The first is known as a **tragedy of the commons**. In 1968, Garrett Hardin wrote an essay describing why this kind of dilemma emerges in society. He begins with the classic example of the "commons," which in the past served as a pasture shared by the whole community and on which anyone could graze their livestock. Because access to the commons was free and without restriction, each individual had an incentive to put as many head of livestock on the commons as possible, thereby increasing his own personal gain. But as everyone made that same decision, the commons inevitably became overgrazed. When a common resource is used beyond its carrying capacity, it eventually collapses, becoming totally incapable of supporting any life at all. In a tragedy of the commons, therefore, the benefit is to the individual but the cost is shared by all.



Fads and Fashion How do television shows such as *Gossip Girl* drive the popularity of trends?

The example of the commons applies to recent history as well. Our natural resources, such as water, air, fossil fuels, forests, plants, and animals, might all be considered similar to a commons. In the case of the U.S. fishing trade, especially, we have seen how, as Hardin put it, "freedom in a commons brings ruin to all" (1968). For example, Professor Stein remembers living in Santa Barbara in the late 1970s, when local abalones were plentiful. Divers off the California coast and around the Channel Islands could make a good living harvesting these mollusks along rocky shorelines. Any good seafood restaurant regularly offered abalone steaks on its menu, and a casual beachgoer might find abalone shells strewn along the sand. By the 1990s, however, abalones had all but disappeared. As each diver reached the same conclusion—that catching as many abalones as possible would increase his own profits—and more divers moved into the same fishing territory, the abalones were no longer able to regenerate their stocks and were eventually depleted to near extinction.

In a variety of similar cases, like the lobster trappers off the New England coast, regulatory agencies have had to step in and place restrictions on the amount of yields allowed. Otherwise, a tragedy of the commons is likely to ensue. We might also consider social, as well as natural, resources as similar to a commons. For example, when too many people crowd the freeways at rush hour or throw litter out the window of their cars, the result is the commons in ruin.

So what can we do to solve these problems? If we could somehow increase the number of abalones in the sea or the number of lanes on the freeway, that would help solve two of them, but only temporarily. At some point use overwhelms supply. To Hardin, social dilemmas are a "class of human problems which can be classified as having 'no technical solution'" (1968). What he means is that science or technology alone cannot solve the problems. The solutions must come from the members of society: people will have to change their behavior.



Tragedy of the Commons Abalone divers rest after making a climb up a cliff. Since the 1990s, abalones have all but disappeared from the coast of California. As the population of the mollusks dwindled, their price increased (they can sell for $100 apiece on the black market), which led more divers to move into the same fishing areas and deplete the population to near extinction.

public goods dilemma a type of social dilemma in which individuals must incur a cost to contribute to a collective resource, though they might not benefit from that resource

The other class of social dilemma is called a **public goods dilemma**, in which individuals must contribute to a collective resource they may or may not ever benefit from. Blood banks are a good example. Because human blood can't be stored for much longer than a month at a time, many people must volunteer to donate blood regularly in order to keep supplies steady. Blood donors can be viewed as helping to create what is referred to as a *public good*, in this case a blood bank. What motivates these people, on average some 8 million a year, to contribute something vital to themselves for which they may never receive anything in return? Everyone is equally entitled to draw from the blood bank regardless of whether or not they have ever given blood. People who take advantage of a public good without having contributed to its creation are called *free riders*. In a public goods dilemma, unlike a tragedy of the commons, the cost is to the individual but the benefit is shared by all.

So how do we get people to contribute to a public good if they are not required to? There are numerous examples of this social dilemma in everyday life, as you know if you've ever witnessed a membership drive on public radio or public television. These noncommercial networks must appeal to individuals to contribute money so that they can continue to produce and broadcast programs. But whether or not anyone responds to the pledge drive, as free riders they can still tune in anytime for nothing. Public goods dilemmas are also a class of human problems for which there are no technical solutions. This is why the government requires us to make certain contributions, in the form of taxes, in order to create such public goods as roads, schools, and fire departments. But there are many other types of public goods, like blood banks, that only individuals can create through their own voluntary contributions.

By examining social dilemmas, we are presented with a dramatic example of mass behavior. We begin to see how seemingly small individual acts add up and cumulatively shape society. So the next time you are faced with a problem like where to throw your litter or whether to give blood, ask yourself what kind of collective outcome you would like your behavior to contribute to.



John Robbins and *Diet for a New America*

John Robbins, heir to the Baskin-Robbins estate, had the kind of childhood every kid dreams of: he grew up with an unlimited supply of ice cream! His uncle (Baskin) and his father (Robbins) started the highly successful chain of ice cream stores that famously features 31 flavors, and John stood to inherit a massive fortune as a result. But he turned down all this wealth and instead devoted himself to promoting the cause of sustainable living. His story makes for an interesting example of how intensely an individual can become personally committed to creating social change.

Robbins has described feeling as though he grew up in two different worlds. In one, ice cream was both a delicious thing to eat and the means for material success. In the other, ice cream was a substance loaded with saturated fat and sugar, which contributed to obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. Robbins had good reasons to be concerned about the effects of ice cream on health: he suffered from serious childhood ailments himself, and his uncle Bert Baskin had a fatal heart attack in the late 1960s. Moreover, he noticed that the same kinds of health problems were widespread in the larger society, and he began to explore the possibility that what people were eating was connected to their illnesses. As a result, Robbins developed an interest in social activism. He also adopted what is called a plant-based, or vegan, diet (and regained much of his health) and began to research how diet affects not only the individual but society as well.

In his Pulitzer Prize–nominated book *Diet for a New America: How Your Food Choices Affect Your Health, Happiness and the Future of Life on Earth* (1987), Robbins argues that while a diet heavy in animal products such as meat and dairy foods can be bad for individual health, it can also be catastrophic for the health of the planet. He links what is essentially a personal choice, for instance whether to eat eggs and bacon for breakfast or a burger and milkshake for lunch, to a chain of events that ultimately implicates the future of the entire global ecosystem. For example, animals such as cows, pigs, and chickens must be fed large quantities of water and grain—much more than they eventually provide to humans as food.



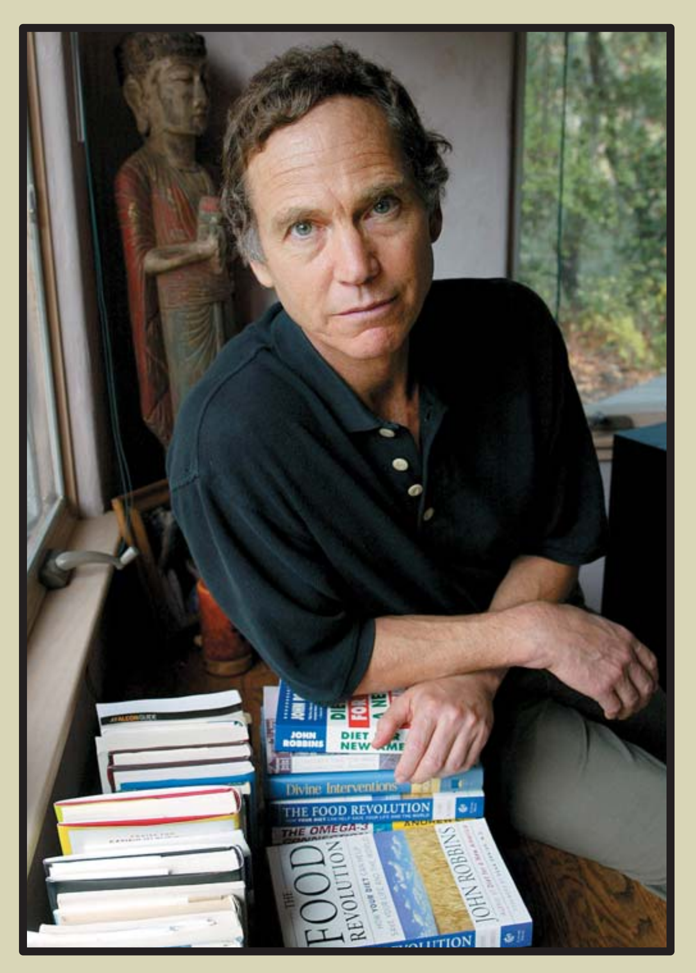
Large-scale meat production is thus simply not an efficient way to feed people. Further, a single cow requires the grass equivalent of one acre of land to produce "58 pounds of protein, enough to sustain one person for 77 days," but "that same acre planted in soybeans produces 580 pounds of protein," enough to sustain a person for 2,200 days (Hizer 1997). As one study found, "even the *least* efficient plant food is *nearly ten times* as efficient as the *most* efficient animal food" (italics added), and when compared head to head, soybeans are 40 times more energy efficient than beef (Robbins 1987, p. 376).

Robbins wants to make people aware that "hunger is really a social disease caused by unjust, inefficient and wasteful control of food" (1987, p. 353). We may assume that famines are caused by drought or poor soil conditions, or perhaps corrupt governments. According to Robbins, though, there is more than enough food to go around; it's just that we're feeding it to cows instead of needful humans. Problems of hunger are therefore linked to the type of diet that people in Western countries have come to prefer. As more and more of the world's population adopt this type of diet, associated with the "good life" and consisting of animal products with practically every meal, the problems only grow accordingly.

There's more. Most livestock do not graze in large pastures or fields, but are raised in "factory farms" that consist of huge feed lots and containment facilities where thousands of cows do nothing but eat. Under older methods of farming, most animal waste, in the form of manure, returned to the soil and enriched it. But with factory farming, the amount of waste that makes its way into the ground is so enormous that it eventually seeps into the water supply, contaminating the flora and fauna of nearby streams and rivers. In addition, forests are cut down to create fields that can be planted with grain and then harvested to feed livestock. This practice contributes to the growing problem of global warming, with trees no longer available to help mitigate the effects of carbon monoxide in the atmosphere. Cutting trees and planting fields also exacerbates water shortages. "More water is withdrawn from the Ogallala aquifer" in the High Plains to grow grain for cattle than "is used to grow all the fruits and vegetables in the entire country" (p. 370). Furthermore, fields of grain require not only water but also pesticides, herbicides, and other highly toxic chemicals that make their way into the air and water, further polluting the planet.

With his book, John Robbins was making a sociological point: our personal, private decisions have public, collective consequences. A different diet, one consisting of more plant-based foods and fewer animal products, could produce a "new America," one that is "truly healthy, practicing a wise and compassionate stewardship of a balanced ecosystem" (p. xiii). Moreover, the choices Americans make have a global impact. By producing so many meat and dairy products, we not only injure our own health but also grossly underutilize our capacity to produce food for a world wracked by hunger. What we eat for dinner might seem like the most personal decision we could make, but actually the "future of life on earth" is "rarely so much in your own hands as when you sit down to eat" (p. xvii).

In order to further the work he began with *Diet for a New America*, Robbins founded the nonprofit organization EarthSave International (www.earthsave.org). Through EarthSave, he hopes to bring together those interested in a range of social causes—from health and hunger to animal rights and the environment—to work for social change. Robbins may not have ended up with the family fortune, but as a respected and admired opinion leader, he has inspired many people to reconsider their food choices and to join him in becoming activists fighting for social change.



John Robbins

Social Movements

If you're like most Americans, the term **social movement** is inextricably linked in your mind to thoughts of long-haired hippies, VW buses, and the antiwar protests of the 1960s. You may not think of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, birth control, the AFL-CIO, Protestantism, the Revolutionary War, or Nazism—and yet all of these were, at the time of their inceptions, rightly termed social movements.

So what precisely is a social movement? Does the term as accurately describe the efforts of liberals to elect a Democrat to Congress as it does the efforts of peace activists to end war? The answer is no. According to Perry and Pugh, "Social movements are collectives with a degree of leadership, organization, and ideological commitment to promote or resist change" (1978, p. 221); Meyer adds that social movements "challenge cultural codes and transform the lives of their participants" (2000, p. 39). A political campaign cannot usually be described as a social movement, because although it may be considered an organized collective with leadership and (sometimes) ideological commitment, and although it may indeed transform the lives of its participants, its purpose is not to fundamentally alter the status quo. Antiwar protesters, on the other hand, are usually trying to change cultural support of war as an accepted means of solving disputes.

We can safely say that most of the institutions with which we are familiar began as social movements. How did they arise? Why do people join them? And how do today's radicals become tomorrow's establishment?

Several theories attempt to address these questions, but the assumptions behind them have evolved over time. For example, scholars working in the 1940s, 50s, and early 60s generally viewed social movements with suspicion—as "dysfunctional, irrational, and exceptionally dangerous" (Meyer 2000, p. 37). People who joined a movement were thought to be attracted not by its ideals but by the refuge it offered "from the anxieties, barrenness, and meaninglessness of an individual existence" (Eric Hoffer, quoted in Zirakzadeh 1997, p. 9). This explanation, labeled by sociologists as **mass society theory**, was not so remarkable when you consider that researchers in those decades had witnessed the devastating impacts of Nazism, Fascism, Stalinism, and McCarthyism, all of which originated as social movements that eventually devastated millions of lives (Zirakzadeh 1997).

social movement any social groups with leadership, organization, and an ideological commitment to promote or resist social change

mass society theory a theory of social movements that assumes people join social movements not because of the movements' ideals, but to satisfy a psychological need to belong to something larger than themselves

relative deprivation theory a theory of social movements that focuses on the actions of oppressed groups who seek rights or opportunities already enjoyed by others in the society

By the 1960s, however, a sea change had occurred, and a new generation of scholars researching the hows and whys of social movements were inclined to be more sympathetic. After all, the 1960s had seen the rise and relative success of the civil rights movement. While people of color may have been alienated from the larger white society, they were certainly not isolated "joiners" who took up with social movements simply to "satisfy some kind of psychological need" (Meyer 2000, p. 37). The civil rights movement and others were practical political responses to inequality and oppression and provided opportunities for the oppressed to "redistribute political and economic power democratically and fairly" (Zirakzadeh 1997, p. 15). This explanation is called **relative deprivation theory** because it focuses on the actions of deprived or oppressed groups who seek rights already enjoyed by others in society—they are deprived relative to other groups.

VOTING RIGHTS A look at the history of voting rights in America shows the power of relative deprivation theory in explaining certain types of social movements. For more than a hundred years, women and persons of color lobbied hard for the right to vote. (We could also turn this claim on its head by saying that for more than a hundred years, many white men fought hard to exclude women and persons of color from voting.) Officially, African American males were granted the right to vote with the 15th Amendment in 1870, but individual states effectively nullified this right by passing regulations requiring literacy tests, prohibitive poll taxes, and grandfather clauses (if your grandfather had voted, you could too) that specifically excluded them from voting. It wasn't until the 1965 Voting Rights Act was passed that African Americans (men *and* women) gained the ability to exercise their constitutionally protected freedom to vote.

Women, meanwhile, had won the right to vote in 1919 with passage of the 19th Amendment. To reach this point, suffragists had spent decades protesting male-only voting through parades, written propaganda, debates, sit-ins, and hunger strikes. The suffrage movement, however, was primarily a white women's battle. At a rally in 1851, Sojourner Truth gave a famous speech ("Ain't I a Woman") highlighting the exclusion of women of color from the movement. These women would have to wait until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 before they could legally vote.

But neither the Voting Rights Act nor the 19th Amendment secures voting rights for all Americans. To become a registered voter, you must be a U.S. citizen (either native born or naturalized), legally reside in the state in which you

vote, and have an address of some kind. Most states do not allow ex-convicts, prisoners, or those designated mentally ill to vote. There are presently social movements underway to secure this right for some of these disenfranchised Americans, such as certain categories of prisoners and people with no stable addresses.

MOBILIZING RESOURCES The kind of society we live in has a lot to do with whether or not we are likely to join social movements, the tactics those movements will use, and whether or not they will succeed. For example, in a country like the United States, with strong free-speech protections, anyone wanting to support same-sex marriage can publish books and articles, march in the streets (with some restrictions), and write to their legislators. On the other hand, under a restrictive regime like that of the Taliban in Afghanistan, merely teaching a female to read would have been considered an act of rebellion—and marching in the streets would not even have been an option.

In addition to a tolerant society, social movements also need volunteers, funding, office space, telephone banks, computers, internet access, copy machines, and pens and pencils—as well as the know-how to put these into action. Theorists who focus on how these practical constraints help or hinder social movements operate under the assumptions of **resource mobilization theory**. However interesting or important a type of social change may be, no progress will be made unless such practical resources are available. So if we consider those women in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, we realize that some of the most basic human activities, such as reading and meeting together freely, are actually social movement resources that not everyone can take for granted.



Resource Mobilization MoveOn.org is an example of a new social movement that uses grassroots networks and new media technology to raise money and attract new members.



ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Interest Groups and Social Change

In preparation for this Data Workshop, consider the story of a relatively well-established interest group, MoveOn.org. The group was founded in 1998 by Joan Blades and Wes Boyd, the Silicon Valley entrepreneurs who were among the first to develop screen savers for computer monitors (theirs famously featured "flying toasters"). Blades and Boyd were incensed by the impeachment of Bill Clinton, not because they felt his actions were justifiable but because they believed that the process was really just a thinly veiled cover for a political brawl. In late 1998, they started an online petition to "Censure President Clinton and Move On to Pressing Issues Facing the Nation," which quickly garnered hundreds of thousands of signatures. They then set about looking for ways to transform this support into practical action.

MoveOn.org was one of the first groups to successfully mobilize large numbers of people around such issues as partisan bickering and the power of the corporate lobby in Washington, in large part because they have used innovative technology to locate, recruit, and organize supporters. Their e-mail list is "larger than the Democratic Party's," and their aggressive use of the internet to recruit supporters has brought many people into politics for the first time (Janofsky and Lee 2003). The very choice of the group's name both signaled their commitment to e-activism and ensured that anyone with a computer would know how to contact them.

A decade later, MoveOn.org had proven its power as a grassroots organization capable of mobilizing both people and donations toward tangible political action. In 2008, MoveOn.org endorsed Barack Obama, and the organization's 4.5 million members gave a total of $88 million dollars to the candidate. Reportedly, over one million members volunteered to participate during the campaign (and were recruited online), whether it was to register new voters or to canvass battleground states. The enormous success of an organization like MoveOn.org is clearly the

resource mobilization theory a theory of social movements that focuses on the practical constraints that help or hinder social movements' action

result of not just a rise in discontent about the political process but rather the innovative resource mobilization in the Internet Age that has transformed existing sentiment into effective action. As Eli Pariser, the executive director, put it, the Obama victory was the culmination of a decade of work by members of MoveOn.org to create a people-driven politics in America (Kouri 2008).

This Data Workshop asks you to analyze any interest group that is working for social or political change (for a review of interest group politics, see Chapter 11). You will be using existing sources as your research method to do a content analysis of various materials developed by the organization. In particular, you will be looking at how the group uses media technology to advance its agenda—the so-called new media (internet and e-mail) as well as more traditional kinds (television, newspapers, magazines, brochures).

1. Choose an interest group. Identify the group's commitment to a larger social movement or cause, and discuss its particular goals.
2. Discuss the ways in which the group is attempting each of the three aspects of resource mobilization listed below. What specifically would your group like to accomplish in each category?
   a. recruiting members and organizing supporters
   b. raising funds
   c. transforming public opinion or achieving change
3. How does your group attempt to achieve each of the goals listed in number 2? Is it through old or new media, or some combination? Do you think the group would be more successful if it found ways to use new media more often? Why or why not?
4. In addition to the use of media, does the group employ any other strategies to achieve its goals? For instance, do they organize rallies or protests, or participate in community events? (These activities may be connected to larger media strategies; for example, a film screening or protest march might be advertised to attract greater support or might be covered by news agencies.)

   There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Jot down your observations and the answers to the questions above in informal notes. Use these notes as points of reference for discussion with classmates in small groups. Compare your analyses and insights with those of others in your group.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Write a three- to four-page essay in which you answer the questions above.

STAGES IN A SOCIAL MOVEMENT Social movements begin with a few ideas and some people who believe in them. How do they reach the point of marching in the streets (or recruiting members online)? They develop in stages, and those stages were identified by Armand Mauss (1975), who described the first one as the "incipient" stage, when the public takes notice of a situation and defines it as a problem (Perry and Pugh 1978). People do not start organizing because they are content; rather, they "see a discrepancy, either real or perceived, between what they are getting and what they believe they should be getting" and decide to take action (Perry and Pugh 1978, p. 237).

For example, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many laborers were frustrated over their long working hours, low wages, lack of free weekends, and unsafe working conditions. In response, they began to organize—or, in Mauss's words, to "coalesce," which is the second stage—and their movement gained momentum. Laborers, long an exploited segment of the workforce, drew on both traditionally accepted means of dissent, such as pushing for legislation that would improve working conditions, and tactics that were (at the time) "at the edges of political legitimacy," such as striking (Meyer 2000, p. 40).

Today, working conditions have greatly improved for many (though by no means all) blue-collar workers, and unions, once considered marginal or radical, are now seen as part of the establishment. Mauss and others would argue that all successful social movements are eventually incorporated into institutions—that they become "bureaucratized" (stage three). Perry and Pugh assert that "in order to survive, social movements must adapt to their host society or succeed in changing it. When they are successful they become social institutions in their own right" (1978, p. 265). To take another example, early American colonists rebelling against British rule were part of a social movement, but by the late 1700s, they had ceased to be radicals and had become part of an institution themselves.

A social movement's development thus often looks a lot like failure—that is, one way or another, the movement will eventually "decline" (stage four). If it succeeds, it is incorporated into the dominant culture; if it fails, it ceases to exist as an active movement—but may have left an indelible mark on its host society nevertheless. Prohibitionists are an excellent case in point. Although those who wished to outlaw alcohol in the United States eventually failed, after the 18th Amendment (Prohibition) was repealed in 1933, their efforts had a huge impact on American culture. There are still "dry" municipalities (where alcohol is not sold) in the country, for example, and a number of infamous gangsters like Al Capone got their start smuggling booze during Prohibition.

On the Job

Helping Professions and Social Change



Does it sometimes seem as though there's no possible way you could ever make a contribution to changing society? You're just one person, after all, and you may not be rich, famous, or all that influential. Right now your primary concerns probably include graduating and perhaps getting your teaching credential (or social work certification or nursing license) so you can get a job! Also on the "to do" list: find a life partner, start a family, maybe buy a house. But don't think that focusing on your personal goals means that you're totally out of the social change loop. The way you live your life can make a difference all by itself.

Many sociology majors enter what are termed helping professions—these include nursing, counseling, and teaching and can also include careers in the social service, nonprofit, and law enforcement sectors. If you do go into this type of profession, you will find that every individual encounter you have with a client, student, patient, or offender will be an opportunity to make a tiny step toward social change.

As a first-grade teacher, for example, you will be able to introduce students to the joys of reading—a contribution to overcoming illiteracy, even if it involves only 20 kids. As a public health nurse, you urge patients with tuberculosis to finish their courses of antibiotics or you vaccinate children against polio, diphtheria, and measles—and in doing so, you protect the community's health as well as your patients'. When, as a social worker or psychologist, you lead a therapy group for husbands who batter their wives, you have the opportunity to help change the behavior of these men—and to protect their children from continuing a generational cycle of violence. When, as a police officer, you help run your neighborhood's antigang program, you give teenagers alternatives to violent crime, and their choices affect the entire community. When, as a lawyer, you donate your services to a legal clinic that helps undocumented workers gain residency, work permits, and citizenship, you contribute to solving the problems associated with illegal immigration and help change the demographic makeup of your city, state, and country. And even when you volunteer at the adult education center, teaching a computer-training class just once a week, you give your students the opportunity to add a new set of skills to their résumés, find new jobs, and reduce your county's unemployment figures, even if minutely.

Your contributions to social change don't stop here—whom you marry, where you choose to live, and what you teach your children all contribute to the ever-present, ongoing processes of social change. So you don't have to sail away on the *Rainbow Warrior* to make a difference in the world—you can do so in your everyday life as a member of a helping profession, as a community volunteer, and as a parent.





Who Takes Part? Cesar Chavez (pictured in the tan jacket) organized and led the United Farm Workers Union, the first successful union of farm workers in U.S. history. His success is remarkable because sociologists generally believe that the poorest and most oppressed people tend not to participate in social movements.

WHO TAKES PART What kind of individual is most likely to respond to the recruitment efforts of a particular group? Certainly more people are asked to join a social movement than ever actually end up participating. Studies done on student protesters in the 1960s showed that they "were more likely than their less active colleagues to be politically oriented, socially engaged, and psychologically well adapted" and that "participation in non-conventional politics tend[ed] to be an addition rather than an alternative to conventional means of participation" (Meyer 2000, pp. 37, 42). In other words, despite the assumptions of theorists working at the end of the Second World War, activists are not disaffected loners but are instead highly engaged individuals seeking to address perceived injustices on several fronts.

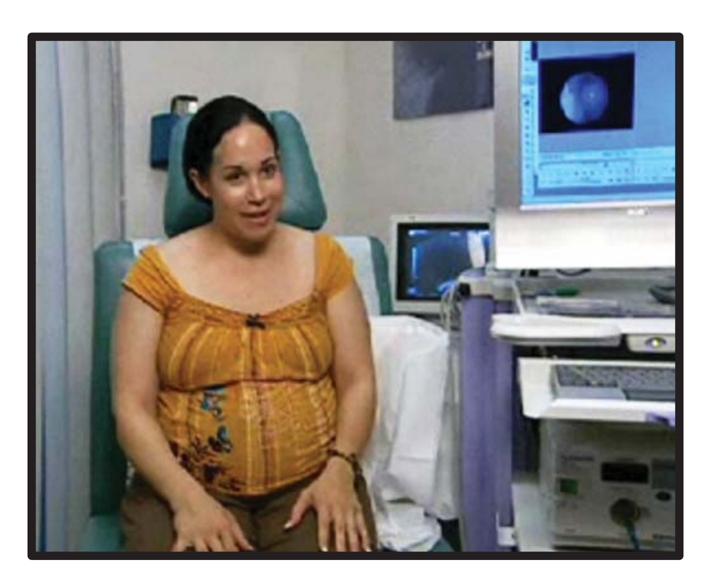
Interestingly, the poorest and most oppressed people tend not to participate in social movements. For these individuals, the consequences of participation may be too high, and they may not have the resources necessary to join in (Perry and Pugh 1978; Zirakzadeh 1997). After all, if someone is working three jobs to support her family, it is unlikely that she would have the time or energy to carry a sign in a street protest. There have been notable exceptions to this trend. In the American West during the 1960s and 70s, migrant farm workers organized successfully under the leadership of Cesar Chavez. And more recently, thousands of low-income janitors across the United States have gained fairer wages and benefits by organizing unions as part of a Justice for Janitors campaign.

It is perhaps impossible to overstate the importance of social movements in any given society; life as we know it has been shaped by the rise and fall of all sorts of such movements. Imagine what the religious makeup of the world would be like if Martin Luther and his Protestants had not rebelled against the Catholic Church in the early sixteenth century, or what American culture would be like if Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement hadn't successfully organized. What would world politics have been like if the Nazis hadn't come to power in the 1930s or the Soviet Union hadn't broken up in 1991? The list is endless. Take a moment to consider a few ideas and movements that, in today's culture, seem radical. Whether or not those movements succeed in the traditional sense of the word, it is a pretty safe bet that they will help to shape the world for generations to come. And while the progress made by any social movement tends to happen slowly, the possibility for change and a better society for those future generations is the driving force for those who participate.

Emergent Social Movements: Promoting and Resisting Change

Because society is constantly changing, new social movements are always on the horizon, and even long-standing ones change their goals, strategies, and organizational forms over time. For example, American feminism has taken multiple forms over the last 150 years. Contrast the focus in the early twentieth century on voting rights for women with the 1960s' broader concerns with equal opportunity and "liberation" from the constraints of sexism, and then with the 1990s' crusade to include previously excluded groups like minority women (see Chapter 10 for a review of the different "waves" of feminist activism). Feminism's self-definition, public profile, objectives, and tactics have changed in response to the movement's own successes and failures.

You may be involved yourself in social movements that didn't even exist in your grandparents' or parents' generation (or even 10 years ago). Movements like Critical Mass (cyclists who ride through city streets in large groups each month to protest an automobile-centric society), Straight Edge (nonviolent, drug-free, politically aware, and sometimes even vegan punk rockers who reject promiscuous youth cultures), and PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which campaigns against meat, leather and furs, animal



Can Technology Solve Our Problems? How can it also raise new ethical dilemmas? For instance, how has the story of Nadya Suleman, the Los Angeles woman who gave birth to octuplets in 2009, raised questions about in-vitro fertilization?

experimentation, and other forms of cruelty) have taken shape since you were born. You have different opportunities for **activism** because you live in a different world than your parents did—even if you're still in the same town.

Some emerging social movements are actually **regressive**, or reactionary—that is, they explicitly resist certain social changes, working to make sure things stay the same or even moving backward to earlier forms of social order. For example, reactionary hate movements like Matt Hale's World Church of the Creator, a white supremacist group in Illinois, want to stop the ethnic and religious integration of American society and live in a homogeneous, all-white society. Other regressive movements aren't necessarily motivated by prejudice or hatred of diversity. The voluntary simplicity movement urges members to downsize in all areas of their lives—consumption, time at work, hours in front of the TV, impact on the environment—in the belief that returning to a simpler approach to life will allow them more personal freedom and will benefit society in the long run by conserving resources and reducing stress. Similarly, the Slow Food movement, founded in 1989 as a radical response to the "McDonaldization" of world cuisines, focuses on fresh, local, traditional foods, prepared with care and served in an atmosphere of calm and hospitality—the polar opposite of overprocessed, reheated hamburgers served in a paper bag and eaten in the car.

The "rural rebound" of the 1990s, in which urban residents moved to nonmetropolitan areas in unprecedented numbers (discussed in Chapter 15), is a type of demographic change that seems, on its face, to represent a regressive, back-to-basics movement as well (Johnson 1999). But a rural rebound doesn't necessarily mean that people have returned to declining rural industries such as farming or mining. The 1990s rebound occurred at least in part because of **progressive**, or forward-thinking, social changes—new technologies that made rural living less isolating and facilitated new ways of working. Fax machines and the internet allow for telecommuting from anywhere in the world—which means that high-powered stock brokers needn't necessarily live in Manhattan and work in a "pit" on Wall Street. They can move to Eagle County, Colorado, or Walworth County, Wisconsin, and enjoy cheaper real estate, less crime, and more natural beauty while still performing their jobs.

activism any activity intended to bring about social change

regressive term describing resistance to particular social changes, efforts to maintain the status quo, or attempts to reestablish an earlier form of social order

progressive term describing efforts to promote forward-thinking social change

technological determinism a theory of social change that assumes changes in technology drive changes in society, rather than vice versa

Emerging social movements, whether progressive, regressive, or some combination of both, will undoubtedly change the social landscape over time. If your activism is successful—and even if it isn't—then the social world will be a different place by the time your children are your age. What kinds of activism will they be able to engage in?

Technology and Social Change

As we have already seen, revolutionary social change is often the result of a technological development, whether that technological development is the plow, the assembly line, or the microchip. Social movements can arise as a result of technological advancements as well: labor unions multiplied in the factories of the Industrial Revolution, and today the internet can bring more people together to work for social change than ever before. As you might imagine, then, sociologists have generated theories that seek to explain the role of technology in social change (Kurzweil 1990; Pool 1997). One common characteristic of these theories is an emphasis on **technological determinism**—the idea that technology plays a defining role in shaping society. As one of the earliest proponents of this approach, William Ogburn (1964) described

the process of social change as beginning with invention or discovery and proceeding when the invention is spread from one group or society to another. In the remainder of the chapter, we look at the relationship between technology and social change.

Faith in Technology: Can It Solve Social Problems?

At the beginning of this chapter, we saw how the same medical breakthrough that vanquished smallpox has now made us vulnerable to an epidemic of this virus. It seems that no social change is without its unforeseen, unintentional outcomes, some of which are positive and some of which are not.

This is often especially noticeable in the case of technological advances. We may welcome the invention of a new vaccine, the World Wide Web, in-vitro fertilization, or sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and notice only later that they bring unanticipated problems. For example, the web speeds up communication and give us access to information, goods, services, and people we would never have been able to find otherwise. However, it has also created the opportunity for new kinds of problems: advertisers can now learn about your spending habits by infiltrating your PC with spyware; hackers use similar strategies to shut down entire networks with worms, bots, and viruses; states lose revenues to untaxed internet purchases; and travel agencies struggle to stay in business as individuals use the web to make their own plane and hotel reservations. Similarly, in-vitro fertilization has opened up a Pandora's Box of ethical and moral questions about intervening in the natural process of conception. And SUVs, besides guzzling gasoline (a nonrenewable resource), are more likely than other cars to kill or injure people when involved in an accident.

As a society, how do we respond to technological developments that seem to solve one set of problems (such as disease, infertility, communication, and transportation) while creating new ones? Often we must play "catch-up," scrambling to fix a problem once it manifests itself, rather than being able to plan ahead and prevent it in the first place. **Cultural lag** is the term sociologists use to describe this disconnect between a changing social condition and cultural adjustment to that change. Material culture (such as the technologies discussed above) often changes faster than nonmaterial culture (like beliefs and laws), and we struggle to create new values and norms that correspond with new technologies.

cultural lag the time between changes in material culture or technology and the resulting changes in the broader culture's relevant norms, values, meanings, and laws



ANALYZING MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

The "Un-TV" Experiment

Zen sociologist Barney McGrane (1994) has designed a series of experiments that he has used in his classroom for many years (including the "Doing Nothing" experiment from Chapter 1). While the experiments are simple, the ideas they highlight are very sophisticated. We'd like you to try another one, this time focusing on the ways in which technology permeates our everyday lives and what happens when you resist or try to reverse technology's influence. In this Data Workshop, you will be doing participant observation research while also preparing to write an autoethnography of your experience.

For this experiment, you will be watching TV with a level of consciousness that is unusual; in McGrane's words, "I want you to watch *TV*—not a show, or a program, *just* TV" (p. 61). For each of the numbered tasks in this exercise, focus clearly on exactly what is asked of you. Don't daydream, and try not to think about anything else but what's going on around and inside you. Don't try to figure out what the goal is before you begin. Just "see what you can see."

1. For 10 minutes, watch TV and count the "technical events." (A technical event is anything a camera does that a person can't do—zooming in or out; cutting to a different angle, setting, or scene; playing a voice-over or background music; playing in slow motion or fast forward; putting words or graphics on the screen.)
2. For 10 minutes, watch your favorite TV program without sound.
3. For 10 minutes, watch the news without sound.
4. For 10 minutes, watch someone else watching TV.
5. For 10 minutes, watch TV without turning it on.

After you complete each of these tasks, write down what you observe during that period of time, in as much detail as possible.

What are the insights and patterns in your findings? McGrane's students observed a number of different things that may correspond with your own observations. First, they all had a strong emotional reaction to the assignment itself—they felt anger about and resistance to "wasting" time in front of the TV. This despite the fact that most of us voluntarily "waste" at least some time in front of the TV.

After completing the assignment, McGrane's students found themselves wrestling with profound issues of meaning

vs. meaninglessness; passivity vs. activity; isolation vs. socialization; entertainment vs. hypnosis; and reality vs. fantasy. They made disturbing discoveries about the effect of this particular technology on their everyday lives as individuals and members of society: TV programming, they concluded, makes real life seem dull, isolates people from social interaction, and deadens feeling as effectively as any addictive substance.

How do your observations compare with those of McGrane's students? And what would happen if you modified this experiment to include other types of everyday technology—to go for a full 24 hours, say, without using your cell phone, text-messaging, or e-mail? How would that make you feel, and what would it reveal about the role of technology in our social world? We take these technologies for granted and cannot imagine our lives without them—but maybe life would be better!

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop.

- *Option 1 (informal)*: Complete your observations, and prepare some written notes that you can refer to during in-class discussions. Compare your notes and experiences with other students in small-group discussions.
- *Option 2 (formal)*: Complete your observations, and write a three- to four-page essay analyzing your experience.

Technology in the Global Village

Over the years, social thinkers have expressed concerns about the effects of new technology. Some believed that electronic media would prove to be a dangerous, divisive, and degrading force in modern culture. Marshall McLuhan (1964), a Canadian communications researcher who also subscribed to the notion of technological determinism, expressed a degree of optimism that amounted to a utopian vision of what the various media could do for human society. McLuhan was particularly interested in television, which in the early 1960s was just then infiltrating practically every household in America. As you might remember from Chapter 4, he imagined that television could re-create a sense of intimate community by linking people in disparate locations around the world through its broadcasts. Just as tribe members had once gathered to share stories around the light of a campfire, people would now sit in the glow of their TV screens, making television a kind of "virtual campfire" and those watching together members of a **virtual community**. McLuhan coined the term **global village** to capture that notion. He did not live to see the advent of the internet a few decades later, but he certainly understood the potential for media to extend the human senses and join us to one another in unprecedented ways.

virtual community a community of people linked by their consumption of the same electronic media

global village Marshall McLuhan's term describing the way that new communication technologies override barriers of space and time, allowing people all over the globe to interact

cultural diffusion the dissemination of beliefs and practices from one group to another

globalization the increasing connections between economic, social, and political systems all over the globe

CULTURAL DIFFUSION

The intervening years have not totally confirmed McLuhan's utopian vision. New technologies have in fact had a profound impact on society, but in what ways and whether this has been positive or negative are still to be determined. What we do know is that media technology, through the process of **cultural diffusion**, has become a global reality. Social scientists use the term **globalization** to refer to social structures and institutions, like politics or commerce, that must now be conceived on a global rather than national scale. We can no longer remain isolated from social and political forces that reverberate around the world. There are now billions of people who have access to television and the internet. Over 1 billion were estimated to have watched the first walk on the moon in 1969. Since then, other events such as the funeral of Princess Diana in 1997 and the Live 8 concert in 2005, as well as footage of catastrophic events like the 9/11 attacks or the Indonesian tsunami, have attracted even larger audiences. These are among the most significant images burned into our collective minds.



The Spread of Global Media *House* currently holds the top spot as the world's most popular television drama.

In Relationships

Missionaries and Their Families

In 1996, Evan Carl Hunzike, an American citizen, was arrested in North Korea on suspicion of spying for the United States. He was eventually revealed to be a Christian whose missionary work in northeast China accidentally took him over the border into North Korea. Two years later, Andrew Propst and Travis Tuttle were kidnapped, "roughed up," and eventually released while they were on their Mormon mission in southern Russia. In 2001, a plane carrying an American missionary family was shot down over the Amazon River when the Peruvian Air Force mistook it for a drug-running aircraft; two of the passengers died. Missionaries Gracia and Martin Burnham were vacationing at a Philippine beach resort that same year when they were kidnapped by Abu-Sayyaf rebels and held for over a year; when a rescue was attempted, Gracia was wounded and Martin was killed. A group of Tennessee-based Baptist missionary students had to be evacuated from the Ivory Coast in 2002 as rebels staged a coup and gunfire erupted around their school in the city of Bouake. Four missionaries were killed and one wounded when their motorcade was attacked in Mosul, Iraq, in 2004.

What do all these people have in common? Their willingness to endure hardship and undergo great risk to convert the world's people to their particular branch of Christianity. Their work can be controversial, but even if you object to their activities, you can recognize the radical commitments they have made to social change. They will travel around the globe, move their families to inhospitable places, and put their own safety at risk to promulgate their beliefs. Their goal is to change the world in the ways that they believe are best, even if others disagree.

Researchers estimate that there are up to half a million Christians of all denominations scattered about the world on foreign missions (Barrett and Johnson 2004). While most complete their work without incident, such a mission is still a very serious undertaking. It requires a good deal of financial, legal, and logistical planning as well as a willingness to commit one's family to an unfamiliar lifestyle. Some guidebooks and websites specifically help missionary families prepare for their journeys.

For example, one experienced missionary doctor, Roy Dearmore, advises that families embarking on a mission execute "power of attorney" documents before they go so that a reliable person at home can make decisions about property, child welfare, finances, and medical treatments if anything were to happen to the family while abroad (1997). Passports, visas, and vaccinations must be obtained for all family members. New languages need to be learned. Some supplies—such as prescription medicines, extra glasses or contact lenses, toiletries, even peanut butter or Kool-Aid—may need to be purchased in bulk before leaving because they can be prohibitively expensive or even unavailable in certain areas. Some missionary families live in cities and can rent or buy homes; others in remote areas may have to build their own lodgings.

Most of these global TV events are produced by media conglomerates in the United States and other industrialized nations. For example, the largest television networks belong to MTV and CNN, which broadcast to 166 and 137 countries, respectively. In 2008, the most popular dramatic television series in the world was *House*, which ranked highest on viewing surveys of 66 countries. *Desperate Housewives* was the number one comedy in the world, and *The Bold and the Beautiful* topped the list of global soap operas (AFP 2009). Programs like these potentially attract billions of viewers each week. Very few other countries have the infrastructure or budgets to produce similar shows with the same technical quality.

CULTURAL IMPERIALISM With this proliferation of Western media, we also find that the contents tend to reflect Western values. Communication researchers often talk about the "politics of information flow," and we can see that the message, or ideology, embedded in TV shows or films tends to disseminate from industrialized countries like the United States to the rest of the world (Schiller 1976, 1992, 1996; Tomlinson 1991). Americans brought up on the principle



Missionary Families The Mortimers from the Baptist Evangelical Mission visit the community of Esperanza in the Tahuayo River region of Peru. The family built a well for this community.

Dearmore's book (1997) includes an entire chapter on "wells, springs and outdoor toilets," in case the family needs to dig their own pit-privy! Some can buy food at local markets, while others have to grow their own. In the rural interior of less developed countries, there may be no cell phone relays, no internet connections, no regular mail delivery, and no cable TV. Often ham radios are the best communication devices available. Finally, missionaries may be affected by coups, civil wars, guerrilla fighting, natural disasters, epidemics, or kidnappings. Some missionary "how-to" books address these matters along with more mundane concerns (Koteskey 2003).

Missionary kids ("MKs") may experience distinctive difficulties as American adolescents in unfamiliar environments and may have equal difficulties on returning to the United States when they realize that they have become strangers in their home country as well. Some MKs use humor to deal with their unique situations ("You know you're a missionary kid when you can't answer the question 'Where are you from?'"), but others need more organized forms of assistance. The International Society of Missionary Kids (www.ismk.org) sponsors "re-entry seminars" to help these children adjust to life in the United States after spending their childhoods abroad. For other family members, who may themselves have experienced loneliness, culture shock, or depression, there are specialized counseling agencies that provide mental health services tailored to their needs.

Though their work is difficult and sometimes dangerous, missionaries who have faith in their endeavors are willing to take the risk. Families make great sacrifices in order to disseminate their religious beliefs in foreign places, even though they might meet with resistance. Missionary work is often implicated in cultural imperialism, imposing ideas on people who already have their own perfectly suitable belief systems. You undoubtedly have your own beliefs about the types of social change you'd like to see in the world. The question raised by examining the experiences of missionary families is this: what are you willing to risk to make it happen?

of a free press and living in a media-saturated society are not typically alarmed by the proliferation of our popular culture to other parts of the globe. In fact, we might assume that ours is the voice of freedom and democracy, a force for positive change in places where there have been censorship and disinformation (Rothkop 1997). But others question this flood of ideas, especially ideas about individualism and consumerism, coming from the West.

And Western ideas can cross cultural boundaries all too easily: it is almost impossible to block the reception of satellite and internet communications to audiences anywhere in the world. This sets up a new kind of tension in the struggle for power and influence. It is now possible for a country to be "occupied" by an invisible invader that arrives through airwaves and wireless networks; it can be conquered by ideas rather than by force, a phenomenon known as **cultural imperialism** (recall the example of the Voice of America radio broadcasts in Chapter 4). Some consider the Western media's powerful influence as a kind

cultural imperialism cultural influence caused by adopting another culture's products rather than imposed by military force

Global Perspective

Bhutan and Gross National Happiness

While change may be inevitable, perhaps we may be able to determine the direction, elements, and pace of that change. That is exactly what the current leaders of Bhutan are attempting to do. They provide an example of how to hold on to tradition, maintain a unique cultural identity, and exercise control over the pace of social change.

Bhutan is a tiny country of fewer than a million people, precariously perched at the "roof of the world" in the Himalayan Mountains. Despite its remote location between two of the world's most powerful and populous nations—China to the north and India to the south—Bhutan has remained a sovereign, independent nation throughout its history. In this ancient land, it seems almost as if time has stood still. It is only in the last few decades that Bhutan has emerged from its almost total isolation and taken some cautious steps into the modern era.

Bhutan is a predominantly Buddhist country that until recently had been ruled by a king who had four wives (who were all sisters!) along with a cadre of mostly Western-educated officials. In 2008, at the behest of its enlightened monarch, Bhutan held its first democratic elections. Despite that political change, it may still be the only country in the world where the government's number-one concern is something it calls "Gross National Happiness": a blend of economic development and cultural richness; food, clothing, and shelter; health care and education; spiritual values; and individual contentment. The government hopes to achieve Gross National Happiness by carefully identifying and adopting what the West is doing right while also rejecting its cynicism and consumerism. For example, the Bhutanese do not allow exploitation of their natural resources. There is no lumber industry in their millions of acres of lush forests, which instead have been designated national parks. Although Mt. Everest is nearby in Nepal, mountain climbers are forbidden to ascend the peaks of Bhutan's mountains. The Bhutanese have, however, taken advantage of one natural resource originating in the snowcap—immense, fast-flowing rivers that generate hydroelectric power, which is then exported to neighboring countries. Tourism to Bhutan could also have become a lucrative trade. But here, too, the government has limited the number of visitors who can enter the country each year, and this small group is reminded to practice cultural sensitivity when interacting with the local people.

For the most part, Bhutan has managed to avoid being overwhelmed by the forces of globalization and cultural leveling. While some Bhutanese enjoy basic modern conveniences like cell phone service and wireless internet, in the capital city of Thimphu there are still no chain stores—no Starbucks, no Gap, no Wal-Mart or Burger King. Especially

of cultural domination. The result of this domination is often **cultural leveling**, a homogenizing process whereby societies lose their particular uniqueness as they all start to resemble one another.

As media technology makes possible a multiplicity of voices, Westerners have also been influenced by Eastern ideas (witness the popularity of yoga). Yet Western values continue to dominate and to shape the "village" that is the global village. They sometimes conflict with the values of other nations, some of which have tried to resist the Western media stranglehold and maintain their own distinctive cultural identity (see the Global Perspective box). Challenges persist as to whether meaningful and egalitarian communication on a global level can really take place (Gozzi 1996). Perhaps as technology advances, cultural distinctions can be maintained while divisions continue to fade, thus approaching McLuhan's vision of a world united.

cultural leveling the process by which societies lose their uniqueness, becoming increasingly similar

Implications for a Postmodern World

Today the Digital Age is but a few decades old, and already most of you probably cannot remember a time when you did not have a remote control, mouse, or cell phone in hand.



Gross National Happiness Global networks like MTV and CNN that cross borders via satellite concern Bhutanese leaders who see their children emulating foreign television programs. To counterbalance Western influence, the government created a national television network, the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS).

remarkable is that the Bhutanese have so far been able to defend themselves against what might be the most powerful global intruder of all—television.

While networks like MTV and CNN do sneak in via satellite, the government has created its own national television network, the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS), to balance Western networks. Yet a homegrown production can barely compete with *Baywatch*; the Bhutanese are already sophisticated enough to be critical when comparing a local show with those from Hollywood. So far the BBS has produced only one program, a daily half-hour newscast in both English and the native language of Dzongkha. Still, would-be TV producers have been pitching new ideas that are responsive to audiences' taste for soap operas but include a particularly Bhutanese touch, and they still align themselves with the guiding principle of their country. They see audience members not as primarily consumers, but as citizens in need of knowledge that can help them in their pursuit of Gross National Happiness (Schell 2002).

It is important not to romanticize life in Bhutan or even the pursuit of Gross National Happiness. The country is not a democracy, and it endures high rates of infant mortality, poverty, and illiteracy. Life expectancies are low, and women's opportunities are limited. Certain types of social change would seem to be necessary and inevitable. However, as they prepare for change, Bhutanese leaders remain idealistic about the ability of their traditional culture to resist Western values and to avoid the social problems that are so commonplace in the other parts of the world.

And you cannot imagine living without them. It is safe to assume that we will see many more scientific and technological advancements in the near future. In particular, media technologies are likely to become cheaper, lighter and easier to use, faster, more flexible, interactive, and capable of carrying more information. Despite what some call the "digital divide" (the uneven distribution of technology among different groups of people), technologies will play an increasingly important role in almost every aspect of our lives, and technological literacy will be a necessary skill for anyone participating in contemporary society.

Is all progress good? Is every technological advance beneficial? These questions arise because our society is in the midst of a major transformation: we are moving from a modern society to a postmodern society. **Modernity** refers to the social conditions and attitudes characteristic of industrialized societies, which include the decline of traditional community, an increase in individual autonomy and diversity of beliefs, and a strong belief in the ability of science and technology to improve our quality of life (Berger 1977). In many ways, this last promise of modernity has in fact been fulfilled—since the Industrial Revolution, rates of infant mortality have declined, life expectancies have increased, and a number of common diseases have been cured or controlled. However, along with these advances have come increases in income inequality, violent crime,

modernity a term encompassing the forms of social organization that characterize industrialized societies, including the decline of tradition, an increase in individualism, and a belief in progress, technology, and science

postmodernity a term encompassing the forms of social organization characteristic of postindustrial societies, including a focus on the production and management of information and skepticism of science and technology

and child poverty (Miringoff and Miringoff 1999). So while modern society has its benefits, there are also problems, which is where the postmodern critique begins.

Postmodernity refers to the social conditions and attitudes characteristic of postindustrialized societies, which include a focus on ideas and cultural debates rather than material things and a questioning of the achievements of science and technology. According to postmodern thought, the progress promised by modernity has failed to solve important social problems (such as income inequality), and modern institutions (families, schools, workplaces, governments) are implicated in this failure. Although change is forecast in all these areas, there is no agreed-upon blueprint for what that change might look like. For example, Judith Stacey (1990) argues that traditional family arrangements (working husband, stay-at-home wife, 2.3 children) are ill-suited to the demands of life in a postmodern world and that more creative household arrangements (discussed in Chapter 13) are more conducive to life in contemporary society.

The Industrial Revolution transformed Western society from traditional to modern. The Information Revolution is transforming Western society from modern to postmodern. While we are not yet certain what this particular transformation will mean in our everyday lives, we can be sure that it will not be the final transformation our society will undergo. Society will continue to be shaped by technology, not only at the macro level of culture and social institutions but also at the micro level of groups and individuals. Technology will change what the world looks like as well as how we perceive it. It will greatly extend our abilities to obtain information and will influence the way we use it. We will become more comfortable with multitasking; navigating through nonlinear hyperspace, dealing with symbols, image, and sound as well as text; moving at a rapid pace; coping with a fractured sense of self; socializing online; experimenting with game strategies; and accepting the unpredictable.

Should we call such developments progress? What will we gain, and what do we stand to lose? Your parents and grandparents will not understand the postmodern, digital era in the same way that you do. So it is you who will be engineering the terms of the future. Perhaps now would be a good time to ask yourself what you can do as part of this new social revolution. Can you risk just sitting back to watch what will happen? Or are you willing to take what you have learned and go out and make a difference? We hope this chapter has given you the insight and tools you will need to take an active role in creating whatever positive social change you envision.

Closing Comments

Throughout this text, we have focused on the sociological features of everyday life, including the role of mass media and popular culture in society. The media are often the place where new developments, trends, or social changes first become visible. And our everyday lives are the places where we experience both social constraints and social change at the most fundamental level. You now have the tools necessary to understand these phenomena, because you now possess the sociological perspective.

TABLE 16.1 *Theory in Everyday Life*

Perspective	Approach to Social Change	Case Study: The Environmental Movement
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Sometimes social change is necessary to maintain equilibrium and order in society.	Natural resources are necessary for the survival of society, so the growth of a social movement dedicated to the wise use and conservation of natural resources is functional for society.
CONFLICT THEORY	Social change is the inevitable result of social inequality.	Environmental privileges (such as scenic natural vistas, clean water, and unpolluted air) are unequally distributed among different groups in society. The environmentalist movement works to secure the rights of all citizens, rich and poor, to a clean, healthy, beautiful, and sustainable world.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Social change involves changes in the meanings of things as well as changes in laws, culture, and social behavior.	The environmental movement works to safeguard animal species by having them declared "endangered" or "threatened." Redefining groups of animals in this way allows for their protection through endangered species laws rather than their decimation through hunting or habitat reduction.

The sociological perspective sometimes highlights distressing facts—the persistence of poverty and prejudice, for example, or the realities of crime. But it allows for optimism as well. This is because the intersection of biography and history goes both ways: society shapes individual lives, but individuals impact their society as well. Any disconcerting realizations you may have had over the course of this semester should be tempered by your knowledge that change is possible, and that *you* are its primary source.

Ultimately, this should be the most relevant element of your education in sociology. Years from now, no one will care whether you remember the details of labeling theory or the difference between organic and mechanical solidarity. What will continue to matter is your sense of investment in your society—your commitment to your family, your workplace, your community, and your world. Your mindful involvement in all of these areas can make each of them better places—to raise children, to live, to work, to collaborate with others. Armed with the sociological perspective, you now have a new set of responsibilities: to investigate and participate in your social world, both locally and globally. We hope you do so with optimism and persistence, and in partnership with others.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- **What Is Social Change?** Social change, the transformation of culture over time, is always happening. Although the pace may vary and the changes may be unintentional, society is always in motion. In recent history, change has occurred increasingly rapidly, making it particularly important for sociologists to understand its mechanisms. Although the physical environment, shifting demographics, and individual discoveries may spark change, the most important source of social change is collective action and social activism.
- **Collective Behavior** The earliest theories of collective behavior focused on crowds and considered them irrational. Contagion theory suggests that when people come together, they form a mindless mob whose members are incapable of exercising reason. Emergent norm theory, in contrast, argues that while the crowd *looks* homogenous, the individuals who compose it may understand their membership in a variety of ways. Both of these theories address crowds' behavior, which is one of three basic types of collective behavior: crowds, mass behavior, and social movements. Though they are not mutually exclusive, it is useful to consider each category in turn.
- A crowd is a relatively large group that comes together, either purposefully or at random, and shares a common focus. When many people engage in mass behavior, they take part in similar activities, but they might not share a geographic location. Fads, fashions, and social dilemmas are all examples of mass behavior. Social movements are the most purposeful and lasting form of collective behavior. To qualify as a social movement, collective behavior must be organized and intended to affect fundamental social change. As with crowds, the theories that explain social movements are colored by their historical context. Mass society theory, which developed in the wake of Stalin, Hitler, and Fascism, saw social movements as irrational and dangerous—attractive not because of their ideals but as a way of filling a psychological void in those who joined.
- The 1960s saw the rise of new progressive social movements, leading sociologists to reexamine such movements' origins. Relative deprivation theory stressed that social movements grow out of inequality, as those who feel less privileged within a society are more likely to form and join social movements. Resource mobilization theory focuses on the growth of social movements: the ability, in logistical or material terms, of potential members to come together and act effectively. Finally, sociologists study the life course of social movements, noting that social movements' successes often look much like failure, as movements either fade away or become part of the same institutions they initially tried to change. Each generation has different opportunities for activism, in part because of changes effected by the previous generation.
- **Technology and Social Change** Sociologists have developed a number of theories to explain the role of technology in social change. Many of these theories assume some degree of technological determinism, the notion that changes in technology cause changes in society. Although technological changes sometimes cause beneficial, calculated changes, they can also bring about less desirable, unintended changes. "Cultural

lag" describes the time between technological changes and subsequent cultural adjustments to those changes. In particular, technology has facilitated long-distance interactions and cross-cultural influences, creating a "global village." The resulting changes in social conditions, often referred to as globalization, have had both positive and negative consequences worldwide.

- **Implications for a Postmodern World** Change has been the only constant factor as society has moved from modernity to postmodernity, and change will likely continue at an increasing pace. Technological changes continue to reshape not only the material world but also the people who live there.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. People born even one generation apart can have quite different life experiences because of ongoing social and technological change. List at least three technologies that did not exist when your parents were your age. What social changes have these technologies generated?
2. Some social changes are deliberate, while others are unplanned. Many influential technologies, like the automobile, bring both kinds of change. For example, what kinds of changes were cell phones designed to bring about? What changes did they cause unexpectedly?
3. This chapter argues that social networks are necessary for fads to continue and cites the recent popularity of low-carbohydrate diets as an example. Have you ever been on such a diet, like Atkins or South Beach, or do you know someone who has? How did you or that person hear about it? What convinced you or that person to try it? Describe the social network behind the fad.
4. Fashion can be a marker of group status and often symbolically represents group identity. Do you wear any pieces of clothing, jewelry, or other accessories that indicate your membership in a group? Describe the items and the group(s) they signify.
5. This chapter describes the tragedy of the commons, using overgrazing, overfishing, and exploitation of other natural resources as examples. What public goods that are supported or paid for by the community benefit you as an individual?
6. Mass society theory and relative deprivation theory offer two basic explanations for why people join social movements. Think of someone you know who belongs to a social movement. Which theory do you think more accurately characterizes this person's motivations? How can you tell?
7. *Cultural lag* is the term sociologists use for the period of time when norms, values, and laws are not yet up to date with new technology because material culture changes faster than non-material culture. Describe at least one change in material culture for which there is still some degree of cultural lag. What evidence suggests that we haven't developed adequate norms yet?
8. Marshall McLuhan had a utopian vision for society based on the wonders of communications technology. Even before the advent of the internet, he thought that television would create a "global village." What did he mean by the term *global village*? Which changes brought about by the internet fit McLuhan's predictions? What are the positive and negative aspects of a global village?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Haenfler, Ross. 2006. *Straight Edge: Clean Living Youth, Hardcore Punk and Social Change*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. A firsthand history of a seemingly unlikely social movement and its resistance to commercialization and drug use in the American punk music scene.

Le Bon, Gustave. 1983. *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. Atlanta, GA: Cherokee. The earliest and most influential source of the contagion theory of collective behavior, from the author who was convinced that being part of a crowd meant losing oneself to a herd mentality.

Mackay, Charles. 2003. *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*. Hampshire, UK: Harriman House. A popular history of crowds and economic fads, with special attention to the Dutch tulip craze of the early seventeenth century. Some bulbs cost more by weight than gold—until the bubble burst.

Morris, Aldon, and Carol Mueller. 1992. *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. A collection of pioneering research on the social movements of the 1960s and 70s, including the gay and lesbian movement and the women's movement.

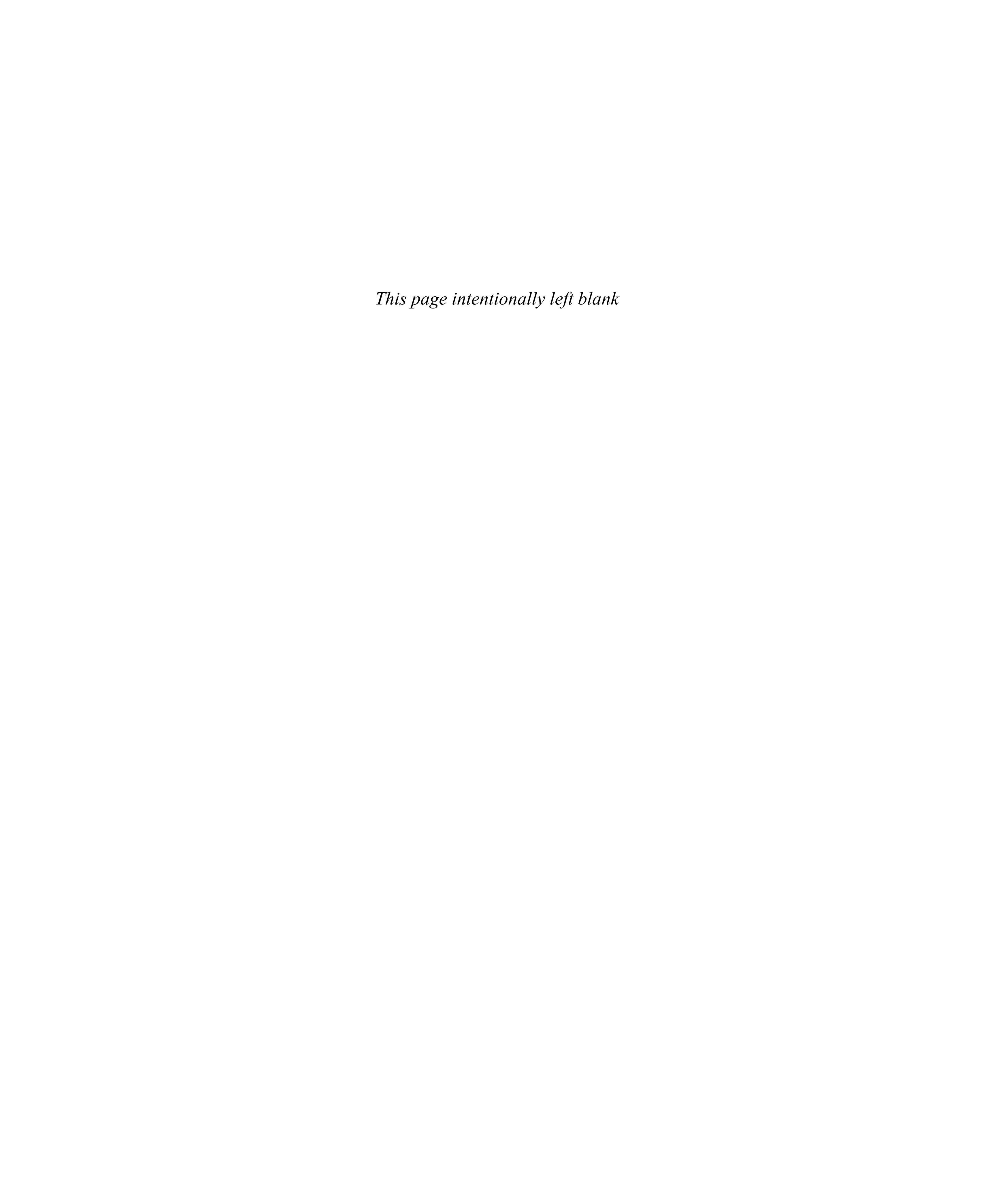
Morris, Aldon. 1986. *Origins of the Civil Rights Movements*. New York: Free Press. A history of the Civil Rights Movement in the American South that draws on firsthand

accounts of the major moments in the movement, many of which suggest that motivations to join civil rights groups at that time were often closely aligned with the explanations offered by relative deprivation theory.

MoveOn.org (www.moveon.org/about.html). This internet-based social movement attempts to provide the resources people need to get involved in the political process.

Tilly, Charles. 2004. *Social Movements 1768–2004*. St. Paul, MN: Paradigm. A comprehensive overview of the origin and growth of the contemporary social movement and the mechanisms by which social movements function.

Union Maids. 1976. Dir. James Klein, Miles Moguleski, and Julia Reichert. New Day Films. This documentary features interviews with three women, Kate Hyndman, Stella Nowicki, and Sylvia Woods, who recall the challenges of labor organizing and union activity in Chicago in the 1930s.


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GLOSSARY

absolute deprivation An objective measure of poverty, defined by the inability to meet minimal standards for food, shelter, clothing, or health care.

access The process by which an ethnographer gains entry to a field setting.

achieved status A status earned through individual effort or imposed by others.

active audiences A term used to characterize audience members as active participants in "reading" or constructing the meaning of the media they consume.

activism Any activity intended to bring about social change.

affirmative action Programs or policies that seek to rectify the effects of past discrimination by increasing representation and ensuring equal opportunity for any previously disadvantaged group.

agency The ability of the individual to act freely and independently.

agenda-setting theory Theory that the mass media can set the public agenda by selecting certain news stories and excluding others, thus influencing what audiences think about.

agents of socialization Social groups, institutions, and individuals (especially the family, schools, peers, and the mass media) that provide structured situations in which socialization takes place.

agglomeration One or more adjacent counties with at least one major city of at least 50,000 inhabitants that is surrounded by an adjacent area that is socially and economically integrated with the city.

aggregate A collection of people who share a physical location but do not have lasting social relations.

Agricultural Revolution The social and economic changes, including population increases, that followed from the domestication of plants and animals and the gradually increasing efficiency of food production.

alienation Decreasing importance of social ties and community and the corresponding increase in impersonal associations and instrumental logic; also, according to Marx, the sense of dissatisfaction the modern worker feels as a result of producing goods that are owned and controlled by someone else.

altruism Unselfish concern for the well-being of others and helping behaviors performed without self-interested motivation.

anomie "Normlessness"; term used to describe the alienation and loss of purpose that result from weaker social bonds and an increased pace of change.

anthropocentric Literally "human centered"; the idea that needs and desires of human beings should take priority over concerns about other species or the natural environment.

Anti-Malthusians Contemporary researchers who believe the population boom Malthus witnessed was a temporary, historically specific phenomenon and worry instead that the worldwide population may shrink in the future.

antimiscegenation The prohibition of interracial marriage, cohabitation, or sexual interaction.

antithesis The opposition to the existing arrangements in a dialectical model.

antitrust legislation Laws designed to maintain competition in the marketplace by prohibiting monopolies, price fixing, or other forms of collusion among businesses.

apartheid The system of segregation of racial and ethnic groups that was legal in South Africa between 1948 and 1991.

applied research Research designed to allow the researcher to use what is learned to create some sort of change.

art world The group composed of everyone involved in the creation, distribution, and consumption of any cultural product.

ascribed status An inborn status; usually difficult or impossible to change.

asexual Person who has no interest in or desire for sex.

assimilation A pattern of relations between ethnic or racial groups in which the minority group is absorbed into the mainstream or dominant group, making society more homogenous.

authoritarianism System of government by and for a small number of elites that does not include representation of ordinary citizens.

authority The legitimate, noncoercive exercise of power.

autoethnography Ethnographic description that focuses on the feelings and reactions of the ethnographer.

backstage In the dramaturgical perspective, places in which we rehearse and prepare for our performances.

basic research The search for knowledge without any agenda or desire to use that knowledge to effect change.

beginner's mind Approaching the world without preconceptions in order to see things in a new way.

belief A proposition or idea held on the basis of faith.

bias An opinion held by the researcher that might affect the research or analysis.

biodiversity The variety of species of plants and animals existing at any given time.

biosphere The parts of the earth that can support life.

bisexuals Individuals who are sexually attracted to both genders.

blue-collar A description characterizing workers who perform manual labor.

bourgeoisie Owners; the class of modern capitalists who are the employers of wage labor.

bureaucracy A type of secondary group designed to perform tasks efficiently, characterized by specialization, technical competence, hierarchy, written rules, impersonality, and formal written communication.

bystander effect The social dynamic wherein the more people there are present in a moment of crisis, the less likely any one of them is to take action.

capital punishment The death penalty.

capitalism An economic system based on the laws of free market competition, privatization of the means of production, and production for profit, with an emphasis on competition and supply and demand as a means to set prices.

caste system A form of social stratification in which status is determined by one's family history and background and cannot be changed.

causation A relationship between variables in which a change in one directly produces a change in the other.

charismatic authority Authority based in the perception of remarkable personal qualities in a leader.

charter schools Public schools run by private entities to give parents greater control over their children's education.

civil inattention An unspoken rule governing interactions in public places, whereby individuals briefly notice others before ignoring them.

civil society Those organizations, institutions, and interactions outside government, family, and work that promote social bonds and the smooth functioning of society.

civil unions Proposed as an alternative to gay marriage; a form of legally recognized commitment that provides gay couples some of the benefits and protections of marriage.

class consciousness Awareness of one's own social status and that of others; also, the recognition of social inequality on the part of the oppressed, leading to revolutionary action.

closed system A social system with very little opportunity to move from one class to another.

closed-ended question A question asked of a respondent that imposes a limit on the possible responses.

code of ethics Ethical guidelines for researchers to consult as they design a project.

coercive power Power that is backed by the threat of force.

cohabitation Living together as a romantically involved, unmarried couple.

collective behavior Behavior that follows from the formation of a group or crowd of people who take action together toward a shared goal.

commodification The process by which it becomes possible to buy and sell a particular good or service.

communism A system of government that eliminates private property; the most extreme form of socialism, because all citizens work for the government and there are no class distinctions.

communitarianism A political and moral philosophy focused on strengthening civil society and communal bonds.

community A group of people living in the same local area who share a sense of participation and fellowship.

community college Two-year institution that provides students with general education and facilitates transfer to a four-year university.

comparative and historical methods Methods that use existing sources to study relationships between elements of society in various regions and time periods.

compliance The mildest type of conformity, undertaken to gain rewards or avoid punishments.

concentration The process by which the number of companies producing and distributing a particular commodity decreases, often through mergers and conglomeration.

confidentiality The assurance that no one other than the researcher will know the identity of a respondent.

conflict Generated by the competition between different class groups for scarce resources and the source of all social change, according to Karl Marx.

conflict theory A paradigm that sees social conflict as the basis of society and social change and emphasizes a materialist view of society, a critical view of the status quo, and a dynamic model of historical change.

conglomeration The process by which a single corporation acquires ownership of a variety of otherwise unrelated businesses.

conservation era Earliest stage of the environmental movement, which focused on the preservation of "wilderness" areas.

constructionists Those who believe that notions of gender are socially determined, such that a dichotomous system is just one possibility among many.

consumption The utilization of goods and services, either for personal use or in manufacturing.

contagion theory One of the earliest theories of collective action; suggested that individuals who joined a crowd or mob became "infected" by a mob mentality and lost the ability to reason.

content analysis A method in which researchers identify and study specific variables—such as words—in a text, image, or media message.

control In an experiment, the process of regulating all factors except for the independent variable.

control group The part of a test group that is allowed to continue without intervention so that it can be compared with the experimental group.

conversation analysis A sociological approach that looks at how we create meaning in naturally occurring conversation, often by taping conversations and examining them.

cooling the mark out Behaviors that help others to save face or avoid embarrassment, often referred to as civility or tact.

copresence Face-to-face interaction or being in the presence of others.

correlation A relationship between variables in which they change together. May or may not be causal.

counterculture A group within society that openly rejects and/or actively opposes society's values and norms.

crime A violation of a norm that has been codified into law.

criminal justice system A collection of social institutions such as legislatures, police, courts, and prisons, which create and enforce laws.

critical theory A contemporary form of conflict theory that criticizes many different systems and ideologies of domination and oppression.

crowd A temporary, public gathering of individuals who share a common focus; members might interact but do not identify with each other and will not remain in contact.

cultural assimilation The process by which racial or ethnic groups are absorbed into the dominant group by adopting the dominant group's culture.

cultural capital The tastes, habits, expectations, skills, knowledge, and other cultural dispositions that help us gain advantages in society.

cultural diffusion The dissemination of beliefs and practices from one group to another.

cultural imperialism Cultural influence caused by willingly adopting another culture's products; also the imposition of one culture's beliefs, practices, and artifacts on another culture through such consumer products and mass media.

cultural lag The time between changes in material culture or technology and the resulting changes in the broader culture's relevant norms, values, meanings, and laws.

cultural leveling The process by which cultures that were once distinct become increasingly similar.

cultural relativism The principle of understanding other cultures on their own terms, rather than judging or evaluating according to one's own culture.

culture The entire way of life of a group of people (including both material and symbolic elements) that acts as a lens through which one views the world and is passed from one generation to the next.

culture of poverty Entrenched attitudes that can develop among poor communities and lead the poor to accept their fate rather than attempting to improve their lot.

culture shock A sense of disorientation that occurs when you enter a radically new social or cultural environment.

culture wars Clashes within mainstream society over the values and norms that should be upheld.

custody The physical and legal responsibility of caring for children; assigned by a court for divorced or unmarried parents.

cyberbullying The use of electronic media (web pages, social networking sites, e-mail, instant messengers, and cell phones) to tease, harass, threaten, or humiliate someone.

cycle of violence A common behavior pattern in abusive relationships; the cycle begins happily, then the relationship grows tense, and the tension explodes in abuse, followed by a period of contrition that allows the cycle to repeat.

deception The extent to which the participants in a research project are unaware of the project or its goals.

deep acting Trying to change your mood to match the expectations associated with the part you are playing in a specific situation.

definition of the situation An agreement with others about "what is going on" in a given circumstance. This consensus allows us to coordinate our actions with those of others and realize goals.

democracy A political system in which all citizens have the right to participate.

demographic free fall Decrease in fertility rates among populations that have industrialized their economies, as children become an economic liability rather than an asset.

demographic transition A theory suggesting the possible transition over time from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates, resulting in a stabilized population.

demographics Statistical characteristics of a population, including but not limited to population size, age, race and gender representation, and rates of mortality and fertility.

demography Study of the size, composition, distribution, and changes in human population.

dependent variable Factor that is changed by the independent variable.

deregulation Reduction or removal of government controls from an industry to allow for a free and efficient marketplace.

desistance The tendency of individuals to age out of crime over the life course.

deterrence An approach to punishment that relies on the threat of harsh penalties to discourage people from committing crimes.

deviance A behavior, trait, belief, or other characteristic that violates a norm and causes a negative reaction.

deviance avowal Process by which an individual self-identifies as deviant and initiates his or her own labeling process.

dialectical model Marx's model of historical change, whereby two extreme positions come into conflict and create some new third position between them.

differential association theory Edwin Sutherland's hypothesis that we learn to be deviant through our associations with deviant peers.

diffusion of responsibility The social dynamic wherein the more people there are present in a moment of crisis, the less likely any one of them is to take action.

digital divide The experience of unequal access to computer and internet technology both globally and within the United States.

discrimination Unequal treatment of individuals based on their membership in a social group; usually motivated by prejudice.

disenfranchisement The removal of voting rights or other rights of citizenship, either temporarily or permanently, through economic, political, or legal means.

distance learning Any educational course or program in which the teacher and the students do not meet together in the classroom; increasingly available over the internet.

domestic violence Any physical, verbal, financial, sexual, or psychological behaviors abusers use to gain and maintain power over their victims.

dominant culture The values, norms, and practices of the group within society that is most powerful (in terms of wealth, prestige, status, influence, etc.).

double-barreled questions Questions that attempt to get at multiple issues at once and so tend to receive incomplete answers.

double consciousness W.E.B. DuBois's term for the conflict felt by and about African Americans, who were both American (and hence entitled to rights and freedoms) and African (and hence subject to prejudices and discrimination) at the same time.

dramaturgy A theoretical paradigm pioneered by Erving Goffman in which social life is analyzed in terms of its similarities to theatrical performance to understand how individuals present themselves to others.

dual nature of the self The belief that we experience the self as both subject and object, the "I" and the "me."

dyad A two-person social group.

dysfunction A disturbance to or undesirable consequence of some aspect of the social system.

dystopia Opposite of a utopia; a world where social problems are magnified and the quality of life is extremely low.

early college high schools Institutions in which students earn a high school diploma and two years of credit toward a bachelor's degree.

Earth Day A holiday conceived of by environmental activist and Senator Gaylord Nelson to encourage support for and increase awareness of environmental concerns; first celebrated on March 22, 1970.

eco-friendly A term describing any activity or product that attempts to minimize its environmental impact.

ecological footprint An estimation of the land and water area required to produce all the goods an individual consumes and to assimilate all the wastes he or she generates.

ecoterrorism Use of violence or criminal methods to protect the environment, often in high-profile, publicity-generating ways.

ecotourism Foreign travel with the goal of minimizing the environmental consequences of tourism as well as its possible negative effects on local cultures and economies; typically involves people from highly industrialized nations traveling to less developed countries.

edge cities Centers of employment and commerce that began as suburban commuter communities.

education The process by which a society transmits its knowledge, values, and expectations to its members so they can function effectively.

ego According to Freud, one of three interrelated parts that make up the mind; the ego is the realistic aspect of the mind that balances the forces of the id and the superego.

electronic or virtual communities Social groups whose interactions are mediated through information technologies, particularly the internet; also called virtual communities.

elites Those in power in a society.

embodied identity Those elements of identity that are generated through others' perceptions of our physical traits.

embodied status A status generated by physical characteristics.

emergent norm theory A theory of collective behavior that assumes individual members of a crowd make their own decisions about behavior and that norms are created through others' acceptance or rejection of these behaviors.

emigration Leaving one country to live permanently in another.

emotion work (emotional work) The process of evoking, suppressing, or otherwise managing feelings to create a publicly observable display of emotion.

empirical Based on scientific experimentation or observation.

encoding/decoding model A theory of media combining models that privilege the media producer and models that view the audience as the primary source of meaning; this theory recognizes that media texts are created to deliver specific messages *and* that individuals actively interpret them.

endogamy Marriage to someone within one's social group.

environment In sociology, the natural world, the human-made environment, and the interaction between the two.

environmental justice A movement that aims to remedy environmental inequities such as threats to public health and the unequal treatment of certain communities with regard to ecological concerns.

environmental movement A social movement organized around concerns about the relationship between humans and the environment.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) A government agency organized in 1969 to "create and maintain conditions in which man and nature can exist in productive harmony."

environmental racism Any environmental policy or practice that negatively affects individuals, groups, or communities because of their race or ethnicity.

environmental sociology The study of the interaction between society and the natural environment, including the social causes and consequences of environmental problems.

Eros In Freudian psychology, the drive or instinct that desires productivity and construction.

essentialists Those who believe gender roles have a genetic or biological origin and therefore cannot be changed.

ethnicity A socially defined category based on common language, religion, nationality, history, or another cultural factor.

ethnocentrism The principle of using one's own culture as a means or standard by which to evaluate another group or individual, leading to the view that cultures other than one's own are abnormal.

ethnography A naturalistic method based on studying people in their own environment in order to understand the meanings they attribute to their activities; also the written work that results from the study.

ethnomethodology The study of "folk methods," or everyday interactions, that must be uncovered rather than studied directly.

Eurocentrism The tendency to favor European or Western history, culture, and values over other cultures.

evangelical A term describing conservative Christians who emphasize converting others to their faith.

everyday actor One who has the practical knowledge needed to get through daily life but not necessarily the scientific or technical knowledge of how things work.

existing sources Any data that have already been collected and are available for future research.

exogamy Marriage to someone from a different social group.

experimental group The part of a test group that receives the experimental treatment.

experiments Formal tests of specific variables and effects, performed in a controlled setting where all aspects of the situation can be controlled.

expressions given Expressions that are intentional and usually verbal, such as utterances.

expressions given off Observable expressions that can be either intended or unintended and are usually non-verbal.

expressions of behavior Small actions such as an eye roll or head nod, which serve as an interactional tool to help project our definition of the situation to others.

expressive leadership Leadership concerned with maintaining emotional and relational harmony within the group.

expressive role The position of the family member who provides emotional support and nurturing.

expressive tasks The emotional work necessary to support family members.

extended family A large group of relatives, usually including at least three generations living either in one household or in close proximity.

extrinsic religiosity A person's public display of commitment to a religious faith.

fads Interests or practices followed enthusiastically for a relatively short period of time.

false consciousness A denial of the truth on the part of the oppressed when they fail to recognize the interests of the ruling class in their ideology.

family A social group whose members are bound by legal, biological, or emotional ties, or a combination of all three.

family planning Contraception, or any method of controlling family size and the birth of children.

fashion The widespread custom or style of behavior and appearance at a particular time or in a particular place.

feeling rules Socially constructed norms regarding the expression and display of emotions; expectations about the acceptable or desirable feelings in a given situation.

feminism Belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes; also the social movements organized around that belief.

feminist theory A theoretical approach that looks at gender inequities in society and the way that gender structures the social world.

feminization of poverty The economic trend showing that women are more likely than men to live in poverty, caused in part by the gendered gap in wages, the higher proportion of single mothers compared to single fathers, and the increasing costs of childcare.

fertility rate A measure of population growth through reproduction; often expressed as the average number of births per 1,000 people in the total population or the average number of children a woman would be expected to have.

feudal system A system of social stratification based on a hereditary nobility who were responsible for and served by a lower stratum of forced laborers called serfs.

fictive kin People to whom we refer with kinship terms in order to describe a particularly close relationship even though they are not related by blood, marriage, or adoption.

fieldnotes Detailed notes taken by an ethnographer describing her activities and interactions, which later become the basis of the ethnographic analysis.

first wave The earliest period of feminist activism in the United States, including the period from the mid-nineteenth century until American women won the right to vote in 1920.

527 committees Organizations that have no official connection to a candidate but that raise and spend funds like a campaign does; named after the section of the tax code that authorizes their existence.

folkway A loosely enforced norm involving common customs, practices, or procedures that ensure smooth social interaction and acceptance.

Fourth Estate The media, which are considered like a fourth branch of government (after the executive, legislative, and judiciary) and thus serve as another of the checks and balances on power.

front In the dramaturgical perspective, the setting or scene of performances that helps establish the definition of the situation.

frontstage In the dramaturgical perspective, the region in which we deliver our public performances.

fundamentalism The practice of emphasizing literal interpretation of texts and a "return" to a time of greater religious purity; represented by the most conservative group within any religion.

game stage The third stage in Mead's theory of the development of self wherein children play organized games and take on the perspective of the generalized other.

gender The physical, behavioral, and personality traits that a group considers normal for its male and female members.

gender identity The roles and traits that a social group assigns to a particular gender.

gender role socialization The lifelong process of learning to be masculine or feminine, primarily through four agents of socialization: families, schools, peers, and the media.

generalized other The perspectives and expectations of a network of others (or of society in general) that a child learns and then takes into account when shaping his or her own behavior.

genocide The deliberate and systematic extermination of a racial, ethnic, national, or cultural group.

gentrification Transformation of the physical, social, economic, and cultural life of formerly working-class or poor inner-city neighborhoods into more affluent middle-class communities.

gestures The ways in which people use their bodies to communicate without words; actions that have symbolic meaning.

global cities A term for megacities or megalopolises that emphasizes their global impact as centers of economic, political, and social power.

global dimming A decline in the amount of light reaching the earth's surface because of increased air pollution, which reflects more light back into space.

global village Marshall McLuhan's term describing the way that new communication technologies override barriers of space and time, allowing people all over the globe to interact.

global warming Gradual increase in the earth's temperature, driven recently by an increase in greenhouse gases and other human activity.

globalization The cultural and economic changes resulting from dramatically increased international trade and exchange in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

government The formal, organized agency that exercises power and control in modern society, especially through the creation and enforcement of laws.

grassroots environmentalism Fourth major stage of the environmental movement; distinguished by the diversity of its members and belief in citizen participation in environmental decision making.

Green Party A U.S. political party established in 1984 to bring political attention to environmentalism, social justice, diversity, and related principles.

greenhouse effect The process in which increased production of greenhouse gases, especially those arising from human activity (e.g., carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane) cause the earth's temperature to rise.

greenhouse gases Any gases in the earth's atmosphere that allow sunlight to pass through but trap heat, thus affecting temperature.

grounded theory An inductive method of generating theory from data by creating categories in which to place data and then looking for relationships between categories.

group A collection of people who share some attribute, identify with one another, and interact with each other.

group cohesion The sense of solidarity or loyalty that individuals feel toward a group to which they belong.

group dynamics The patterns of interaction between groups and individuals.

groupthink In very cohesive groups, the tendency to enforce a high degree of conformity among members, creating a demand for unanimous agreement.

growth rate Expression of changes in population size over time figured by subtracting the number of deaths from the number of births, then adding the net migration.

Hawthorne effect A specific example of reactivity, in which the desired effect is the result not of the independent variable, but of the research itself.

hegemony Term developed by Antonio Gramsci to describe the cultural aspects of social control whereby the ideas of the dominant social group are accepted by all of society.

hermaphroditic Term to describe a person whose chromosomes or sex characteristics are neither exclusively male nor exclusively female.

heterogamy Choosing romantic partners who are dissimilar to us in terms of class, race, education, religion, and other social group membership.

hidden curriculum Values or behaviors that students learn indirectly over the course of their schooling because of the structure of the educational system and the teaching methods used.

high culture Those forms of cultural expression usually associated with the elite or dominant classes.

homeschooling The education of children by their parents, at home.

homogamy Choosing romantic partners who are similar to us in terms of class, race, education, religion, and other social group membership.

homophobia Fear of or discrimination toward homosexuals or toward individuals who display purportedly gender-inappropriate behavior.

homosexuality The tendency to feel sexual desire toward members of one's own gender.

horizontal social mobility The occupational movement of individuals or groups within a social class.

human exemptionalism The attitude that humans are exempt from natural ecological limits.

human sexual dimorphism The extent, much debated in recent years, to which inherent physical differences define the distinctions between the two sexes.

hypergamy Marrying "up" in the social class hierarchy.

hypodermic needle theory A theory that explains the effects of media as if their contents simply entered directly into the consumer, who is powerless to resist their influence. Also called the magic bullet theory.

hypogamy Marrying "down" in the social class hierarchy.

hypothesis A theoretical statement explaining the relationship between two or more phenomena.

id According to Freud, one of three interrelated parts that make up the mind; the id consists of basic inborn drives that are the source of instinctive psychic energy.

ideal culture The norms, values, and patterns of behavior that members of a society believe should be observed in principle.

identification A type of conformity stronger than compliance and weaker than internalization, caused by a desire to establish or maintain a relationship with a person or a group.

ideology A system of beliefs, attitudes, and values that directs a society and reproduces the status quo of the bourgeoisie.

idioculture The customs, practices, and values expressed in a particular place by the people who interact there.

immigration Entering one country from another to take up permanent residence.

impression management The effort to control the impressions we make on others so that they form a desired view of us and the situation; the use of self-presentation and performance tactics.

incapacitation An approach to punishment that seeks to protect society from criminals by imprisoning or executing them.

incest Proscribed sexual contact between family members; a form of child abuse when it occurs between a child and a caregiver.

Independent Sector The part of the economy composed of non-profit organizations; their workers are mission driven, rather than profit driven, and such organizations direct surplus funds to the causes they support. Also called the Third Sector.

independent variable Factor that is predicted to cause change.

individual discrimination Discrimination carried out by one person against another.

Industrial Revolution The rapid transformation of social life resulting from the technological and economic developments that began with the assembly line, steam power, and urbanization.

infant mortality Average number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births in a particular population.

influential power Power that is supported by persuasion.

Information Revolution The recent social revolution made possible by the development of the microchip in the 1970s, which brought about vast improvements in the ability to manage information.

informed consent A safeguard through which the researcher makes sure that respondents are freely participating and understand the nature of the research.

in-group A group that one identifies with and feels loyalty toward.

in-group orientation Among stigmatized individuals, an orientation away from mainstream society and toward new standards that value their group identity.

innovators Individuals who accept society's approved goals, but not society's approved means to achieve them.

institutional discrimination Discrimination carried out systematically by institutions (political, economic, educational, and other) that affect all members of a group who come into contact with them.

institutional review board A group of scholars within a university who meet regularly to review and approve the research proposals of their colleagues and make recommendations for how to protect human subjects.

instrumental leadership Leadership that is task or goal oriented.

instrumental role The position of the family member who provides the family's material support and is often an authority figure.

instrumental tasks The practical physical tasks necessary to maintain family life.

intentional community Any of a variety of groups who form communal living arrangements outside marriage.

intergenerational mobility Movement between social classes that occurs from one generation to the next.

internal colonialism The economic and political domination and subjugation of the minority group by the controlling group within a nation.

internal migration Movement of population within a country.

internalization The strongest type of conformity, occurring when an individual adopts the beliefs or actions of a group and makes them her own.

interpretive community A group of people dedicated to the consumption and interpretation of a particular cultural product and who create a collective, social meaning for the product.

interpretive strategies The ideas and frameworks that audience members bring to bear on a particular media text to understand its meaning.

intersexed Term to describe a person whose chromosomes or sex characteristics are neither exclusively male nor exclusively female.

intervening variable A third variable, sometimes overlooked, that explains the relationship between two other variables.

interviews Face-to-face, information-seeking conversation, sometimes defined as a conversation with a purpose.

intragenerational mobility The movement between social classes that occurs over the course of an individual's lifetime.

intrinsic religiosity A person's inner religious life or personal relationship to the divine.

iron cage Max Weber's pessimistic description of modern life, in which the "technical and economic conditions of machine production" control our lives through rigid rules and rationalization.

just-world hypothesis Argues that people have a deep need to see the world as orderly, predictable, and fair, which creates a tendency to view victims of social injustice as deserving of their fates.

kin Relatives or relations, usually those related by common descent.

knowledge workers Those who work primarily with information and who create value in the economy through ideas, judgments, analyses, designs, or innovations.

labeling theory Howard Becker's idea that deviance is a consequence of external judgments, or labels, which modify the individual's self-concept and change the way others respond to the labeled person.

language A system of communication using vocal sounds, gestures, or written symbols; the basis of symbolic culture and the primary means through which we communicate with one another and perpetuate our culture.

latent functions The less obvious, perhaps unintended functions of a social structure.

law A common type of formally defined norm providing an explicit statement about what is permissible and what is illegal in a given society.

leading questions Questions that predispose a respondent to answer in a certain way.

legal-rational authority Authority based in laws, rules, and procedures, not in the heredity or personality of any individual leader.

leisure A period of time that can be spent relaxing, engaging in recreation, or otherwise indulging in freely chosen activities.

liberation theology A movement within the Catholic Church to understand Christianity from the perspective of the poor and oppressed, with a focus on fighting injustice.

life expectancy Average age to which people in a particular population live.

lifestyle enclaves Groups of people drawn together by shared interests, especially those relating to hobbies, sports, and media.

Likert scale A way of organizing categories on a survey question so that the respondent can choose an answer along a continuum.

literature review A thorough search through previously published studies relevant to a particular topic.

looking-glass self The notion that the self develops through our perception of others' evaluations and appraisals of us.

lower-middle class Mostly "blue-collar" or service industry workers who are less likely to have a college degree; they constitute about 30 percent of the U.S. population.

macrosociology The level of analysis that studies large-scale social structures in order to determine how they affect the lives of groups and individuals.

magic bullet theory A theory that explains the effects of media as if their contents simply entered directly into the consumer, who is powerless to resist their influences. Also called the hypodermic needle theory.

mainstream environmentalism Beginning in the 1980s, the third major stage of the environmental movement; characterized by increasing organization, well-crafted promotional campaigns, sophisticated political tactics, and an increasing reliance on economic and scientific expertise.

male liberationism A movement that originated in the 1970s to discuss the challenges of masculinity.

Malthusian theorem The theory that exponential population growth will outpace arithmetic growth in food production and other resources.

Malthusian trap Malthus's prediction that a rapidly increasing population will overuse natural resources, leading inevitably to a major public health disaster.

manifest functions The obvious, intended functions of a social structure for the social system.

mass behavior Large groups of people engaging in similar behaviors without necessarily being in the same place.

mass society theory A theory of social movements that assumes people join social movements not because of the movements' ideals, but to satisfy a psychological need to belong to something larger than themselves.

master status A status that is always relevant and affects all others statuses we possess.

material culture The objects associated with a cultural group, such as tools, machines, utensils, buildings, and artwork; any physical object which we give social meaning.

McDonaldization George Ritzer's term describing the spread of bureaucratic rationalization and the accompanying increases in efficiency and dehumanization.

means of production Anything that can create wealth: money, property, factories, and other types of businesses, and the infrastructure necessary to run them.

mechanical solidarity Term developed by Emile Durkheim to describe the type of social bonds present in premodern, agrarian societies, in which shared tradition and beliefs created a sense of social cohesion.

megalopolis A group of densely populated metropolises that grow dependent on each other and eventually combined to form a huge urban complex; also called a megacity.

men's rights movement An offshoot of male liberationism whose members believe that feminism promotes discrimination against men.

merger The legal combination of two companies, usually in order to maximize efficiency and profits by eliminating redundant infrastructure and personnel.

meritocracy A system in which rewards are distributed based on merit.

metropolis An urban area with a large population, usually 500,000 to 1,000,000 people.

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) One or more adjacent counties with at least one major city of at least 50,000 inhabitants that is surrounded by an adjacent area that is socially and economically integrated with the city.

microsociology The level of analysis that studies face-to-face and small-group interactions in order to understand how those interactions affect the larger patterns and institutions of society.

middle class Composed primarily of "white-collar" workers with a broad range of incomes; they constitute about 30 percent of the U.S. population.

migration Movement of people from one geographic area to another for the purposes of resettling.

minority group Members of a social group that is systematically denied the same access to power and resources available to society's dominant groups but who are not necessarily fewer in number than the dominant groups.

miscegenation Romantic, sexual, or marital relationships between people of different races.

modern environmental movement Beginning in the 1960s, the second major stage of the environmental movement; focused on the environmental consequences of new technologies, oil exploration, chemical production, and nuclear power plants.

modernism A paradigm that places trust in the power of science and technology to create progress, solve problems, and improve life.

monarchy A government ruled by a king or queen, with succession of rulers kept within the family.

monogamy The practice of marrying (or being in a relationship with) one person at a time.

monopoly A situation in which there is only one individual or organization, without competitors, providing a particular good or service.

monotheistic A term describing religions that worship a single divine figure.

more A norm that carries great moral significance, is closely related to the core values of a cultural group, and often involves severe repercussions for violators.

mortality rate A measure of the decrease in population due to deaths; often expressed as the number of deaths expected per 1,000 people per year in a particular population.

multiculturalism A policy that values diverse racial, ethnic, national, and linguistic backgrounds and so encourages the retention of cultural differences within society rather than assimilation.

natural increase Change in population size that results from births and deaths; linked to a country's progress toward demographic transition.

nature vs. nurture debate The ongoing discussion of the respective roles of genetics and socialization in determining individual behaviors and traits.

negative questions Survey questions that ask respondents what they don't think instead of what they do.

neglect A form of child abuse in which the caregiver fails to provide adequate nutrition, sufficient clothing or shelter, or hygienic and safe living conditions.

Neo-Malthusians Contemporary researchers who worry about the rapid pace of population growth and believe that Malthus's basic prediction could be true.

net migration Net effect of immigration and emigration on an area's population in a given time period, expressed as an increase or decrease.

new ecological paradigm A way of understanding human life as just one part of an ecosystem that includes many species' interactions with the environment; suggests that there should be ecological limits on human activity.

NIMBY Short for "not in my backyard"; originally referred to protests that aimed at shifting undesirable activities onto those with less power; now sometimes used without negative connotations to describe local environmental activists.

nonrenewable resources Finite resources, including those that take so long to replenish as to be effectively finite.

norm A rule or guideline regarding what kinds of behavior are acceptable and appropriate within a culture.

nuclear family A heterosexual couple with one or more children living in a single household.

objectivity Impartiality, the ability to allow the facts to speak for themselves.

open system A social system with ample opportunities to move from one class to another.

open-ended question A question asked of a respondent that allows the answer to take whatever form the respondent chooses.

operational definition A clear and precise definition of a variable that facilitates its measurement.

opinion leaders High-profile individuals whose interpretation of events influences the public.

organic solidarity Term developed by Emile Durkheim to describe the type of social bonds present in modern societies, based on difference, interdependence, and individual rights.

out-group Any group an individual feels opposition, rivalry, or hostility toward.

outsiders According to Howard Becker, those labeled deviant and subsequently segregated from "normal" society.

outsourcing "Contracting out" or transferring to another country the labor that a company might otherwise have employed its own staff to perform; typically done for financial reasons.

paradigm A set of assumptions, theories, and perspectives that make up a way of understanding social reality.

paradigm shift The term used to describe a change in basic assumptions of a particular scientific discipline.

participant observation A methodology associated with ethnography whereby the researcher both observes and becomes a member in a social setting.

particular or significant other The perspectives and expectations of a particular role that a child learns and internalizes.

passing Presenting yourself as a member of a different racial or ethnic group than the one you were born into.

patriarchy Literally meaning "rule of the father"; a male-dominated society.

personal front The expressive equipment we consciously or unconsciously use as we present ourselves to others, including appearance and manner, to help establish the definition of the situation.

pilot study A small study carried out to test the feasibility of a larger one.

play stage The second stage in Mead's theory of the development of self wherein children pretend to play the role of the particular or significant other.

pluralism A cultural pattern of intergroup relations that encourages racial and ethnic variation within a society.

pluralist model A system of political power in which a wide variety of individuals and groups have equal access to resources and the mechanisms of power.

pluralistic ignorance A process in which members of a group individually conclude that there is no need to take action because of the observation that other group members have not done so.

political action committee (PAC) An organization that raises money to support the interests of a select group or organization.

politics Methods and tactics intended to influence government policy; policy-related attitudes and activities.

pollution Any environmental contaminant that harms living beings.

polyandry A system of marriage that allows women to have multiple husbands.

polygamy A system of marriage that allows people to have more than one spouse at a time.

polygyny A system of marriage that allows men to have multiple wives.

polysemy Having many possible meanings or interpretations.

popular culture Usually contrasted with the high culture of elite groups; forms of cultural expression usually associated with the masses, consumer goods, and commercial products.

population transfer The forcible removal of a group of people from the territory they have occupied.

positive deviance Actions considered deviant within a given context, but which are later reinterpreted as appropriate or even heroic.

positivism The theory, developed by Auguste Comte, that sense perceptions are the only valid source of knowledge.

postmodernism A paradigm that suggests that social reality is diverse, pluralistic, and constantly in flux.

postmodernity A term encompassing the forms of social organization characteristic of postindustrial societies, including a focus on the production and management of information and skepticism of science and technology.

power The ability to control the actions of others.

power elite C. Wright Mills's term for a relatively small number of people who control the economic, political, and military institutions of a society.

pragmatism A theoretical perspective that assumes organisms (including humans) make practical adaptations to their environments. Humans do this through cognition, interpretation, and interaction.

praxis Practical action that is taken on the basis of intellectual or theoretical understanding.

prejudice An idea about the characteristics of a group that is applied to all members of that group and is unlikely to change regardless of the evidence against it.

preparatory stage The first stage in Mead's theory of the development of self wherein children mimic or imitate others.

prescriptions Behaviors approved of by a particular social group.

prestige The social honor people are given because of their membership in well-regarded social groups.

primary deviation In labeling theory, the act or attitude that causes one to be labeled deviant.

primary groups The people who are most important to our sense of self; members' relationships are typically characterized by face-to-face interaction, high levels of cooperation, and intense feelings of belonging.

probability sampling Any sampling scheme in which the probability of selecting any given unit is known.

profane The ordinary, mundane, or everyday.

pro-feminist men's movement An offshoot of male liberationism whose members support feminism and believe that sexism harms both men and women.

progressive Term describing efforts to promote forward-thinking social change.

proletariat Workers; those who have no means of production of their own and so are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live.

property crime Crimes that do not involve violence, including burglary, larceny theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

propinquity The tendency to marry or have relationships with people in close geographic proximity.

proscriptions Behaviors a particular social group wants its members to avoid.

psychoanalysis The therapeutic branch of psychology founded by Sigmund Freud in which free association and dream interpretation are used to explore the unconscious mind.

psychosexual stages of development Four distinct stages of the development of the self between birth and adulthood, according to Freud. Each stage is associated with a different erogenous zone.

public goods dilemma A type of social dilemma in which individuals must incur a cost to contribute to a collective resource, though they might not benefit from that resource.

qualitative A type of data that can't be converted into numbers, usually because they relate to meaning.

qualitative research Research that works with nonnumerical data such as texts, fieldnotes, interview transcripts, photographs, and tape recordings; this type of research more often tries to understand how people make sense of their world.

quantitative A type of data that can be converted into numbers, usually for statistical comparison.

quantitative research Research that translates the social world into numbers that can be treated mathematically; this type of research often tries to find cause-and-effect relationships.

queer theory A paradigm that proposes that categories of sexual identity are social constructs and that no sexual category is fundamentally either deviant or normal; this paradigm emphasizes the importance of difference and rejects as restrictive the idea of innate sexual identity.

race A socially defined category based on real or perceived biological differences between groups of people.

racial assimilation The process by which racial minority groups are absorbed into the dominant group through intermarriage.

racism A set of beliefs about the superiority of one racial or ethnic group; used to justify inequality and often rooted in the assumption that differences between groups are genetic.

rapport A positive relationship often characterized by mutual trust or sympathy.

rationalization The application of economic logic to human activity; the use of formal rules and regulations in order to maximize efficiency without consideration of subjective or individual concerns.

reactivity The tendency of people and events to react to the process of being studied.

real culture The norms, values, and patterns of behavior that actually exist within a society (which may or may not correspond to the society's ideals).

rebels Individuals who reject society's approved goals and means and instead create and work toward their own (sometimes revolutionary) goals using new means.

recreation Any satisfying, amusing, and stimulating activity that is experienced as refreshing and renewing for body, mind, and spirit.

reference group A group that provides a standard of comparison against which we evaluate ourselves.

reflexivity How the identity and activities of the researcher influence what is going on in the field setting.

region In the dramaturgical perspective, the context or setting in which the performance takes place.

regressive Term describing resistance to particular social changes, efforts to maintain the status quo, or attempts to reestablish an earlier form of social order.

rehabilitation An approach to punishment that attempts to reform criminals as part of their penalty.

reinforcement theory Theory that suggests that audiences seek messages in the media that reinforce their existing attitudes and beliefs and are thus not influenced by challenging or contradictory information.

relative deprivation A relative measure of poverty based on the standard of living in a particular society.

relative deprivation theory A theory of social movements that focuses on the actions of oppressed groups who seek rights or opportunities already enjoyed by others in the society.

reliability The consistency of a question or measurement tool, the degree to which the same questions will produce similar answers.

religion Any institutionalized system of shared beliefs and rituals that identify a relationship between the sacred and the profane.

religiosity The regular practice of religious beliefs, often measured in terms of frequency of attendance at worship services and the importance of religious beliefs to an individual.

renewable resources Resources that replenish at a rate comparable to the rate at which they are consumed.

replicability Research that can be repeated, and thus verified, by other researchers later.

representative sample A sample taken so that findings from members of the sample group can be generalized to the whole population.

representativeness The degree to which a particular studied group is similar to, or represents, any part of the larger society.

repression The process that causes unwanted or taboo desires to return via tics, dreams, slips of the tongue, and neuroses, according to Freud.

residential segregation The geographical separation of the poor from the rest of the population.

resistance strategies Ways that workers express discontent with their working conditions and try to reclaim control of the conditions of their labor.

resocialization The process of replacing previously learned norms and values with new ones as a part of a transition in life.

resource mobilization theory A theory of social movements that focuses on the practical constraints that help or hinder social movements' action.

respondent Someone from whom a researcher solicits information.

response rate The number or percentage of surveys completed by respondents and returned to researchers.

retreatists Individuals who reject both society's approved goals and the means by which to achieve them.

retribution An approach to punishment that emphasizes retaliation or revenge for the crime as the appropriate goal.

riot Continuous disorderly behavior by a group of people that disturbs the peace and is directed toward other people and/or property.

ritual A practice based on religious beliefs.

ritualists Individuals who have given up hope of achieving society's approved goals, but still operate according to society's approved means.

role The set of behaviors expected of someone because of his or her status.

role conflict Experienced when we occupy two or more roles with contradictory expectations.

role exit The process of leaving a role that we will no longer occupy.

role model An individual who serves as an example for others to strive toward and emulate.

role strain The tension experienced when there are contradictory expectations within one role.

role-taking emotions Emotions like sympathy, embarrassment, or shame that require that we assume the perspective of another person or many other people and respond from that person or group's point of view.

rural Relating to sparsely settled areas; in the United States, any county with a population density between 10 and 59.9 people per square mile.

rural rebound Population increase in rural counties that adjoin urban centers or possess rich scenic or amenity values.

sacred The holy, divine, or supernatural.

sample The part of the population that will actually be studied.

sanction Positive or negative reactions to the ways that people follow or disobey norms, including rewards for conformity and punishments for norm violations.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis The idea that language structures thought and that ways of looking at the world are embedded in language.

school vouchers Payments from the government to parents whose children attend failing public schools; the money helps parents pay private school tuition.

scientific method A procedure for acquiring knowledge that emphasizes collecting concrete data through observation and experiment.

second shift The unpaid housework and childcare often expected of women after they complete their day's paid labor.

second wave The period of feminist activity during the 1960s and 1970s often associated with the issues of women's equal access to employment and education.

secondary deviation In labeling theory, the deviant identity or career that develops as a result of being labeled deviant.

secondary groups Larger and less intimate than primary groups; members' relationships are usually organized around a specific goal and are often temporary.

secular Nonreligious; a secular society separates church and state and does not endorse any religion.

segregation The formal and legal separation of groups by race or ethnicity.

self The individual's conscious, reflexive experience of a personal identity separate and distinct from other individuals.

self-fulfilling prophecy An inaccurate statement or belief that, by altering the situation, becomes accurate; a prediction that causes itself to come true.

service workers Those whose work involves providing a service to businesses or individual clients, customers, or consumers rather than manufacturing goods.

sex An individual's membership in one of two biologically distinct categories—male or female.

sexual orientation The inclination to feel sexual desire toward people of a particular gender or toward both genders.

sign A symbol that stands for or conveys an idea.

simple random sample A particular type of probability sample in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected.

simplicity movement A loosely knit movement that opposes consumerism and encourages people to work less, earn less, and spend less in accordance with nonmaterialistic values.

simulacrum An image or media representation that does not reflect reality in any meaningful way but is treated as real.

situational ethnicity An ethnic identity that can be either displayed or concealed depending on its usefulness in a given situation.

slavery The most extreme form of social stratification, based on the legal ownership of people.

smart growth Term for economic and urban planning policies that emphasize the redevelopment of inner cities or older suburbs.

social atomization A social situation that emphasizes individualism over collective or group identities.

social change The transformation of a culture over time.

social class A system of stratification based on access to resources such as wealth, property, power, and prestige.

social construction The process by which a concept or practice is created and maintained by participants who collectively agree that it exists.

social control The formal and informal mechanisms used to increase conformity to values and norms and thus increase social cohesion.

social dilemma A situation in which behavior that is rational for the individual can, when practiced by many people, lead to collective disaster.

social ecology The study of human populations and their impact on the natural world.

social identity theory A theory of group formation and maintenance that stresses the need of individual members to feel a sense of belonging.

social inequality The unequal distribution of wealth, power, or prestige among members of a society.

social influence (peer pressure) The influence of one's fellow group members on individual attitudes and behaviors.

social institutions Systems and structures within society that shape the activities of groups and individuals.

social learning The process of learning behaviors and meanings through social interaction.

social loafing The phenomenon in which as more individuals are added to a task, each individual contributes a little less; a source of inefficacy when working in teams.

social mobility The movement of individuals or groups within the hierarchal system of social classes.

social movement Any social groups with leadership, organization, and an ideological commitment to promote or resist social change.

social network The web of direct and indirect ties connecting an individual to other people who may also affect her.

social reproduction The tendency of social classes to remain relatively stable as social class status is passed down from one generation to the next.

social sciences The disciplines that use the scientific method to examine the social world; in contrast to the natural sciences, which examine the physical world.

social stratification The division of society into groups arranged in a social hierarchy.

social ties Connections between individuals.

socialism An economic system based on the collective ownership of the means of production, collective distribution of goods and services, and government regulation of the economy.

socialization The process of learning and internalizing the values, beliefs, and norms of our social group, by which we become functioning members of society.

society A group of people who shape their lives in aggregated and patterned ways that distinguish their group from other groups.

socioeconomic status (SES) A measure of an individual's place within a social class system; often used interchangeably with "class."

sociological imagination A quality of the mind that allows us to understand the relationship between our particular situation in life and what is happening at a social level.

sociology The systematic or scientific study of human society and social behavior, from large-scale institutions and mass culture to small groups and individual interactions.

solar dimming A decline in the amount of light reaching the earth's surface because of increased air pollution, which reflects more light back into space.

solidarity The degree of integration or unity within a particular society; the extent to which individuals feel connected to other members of their group.

special interest groups Organizations that raise and spend money to influence elected officials and/or public opinion.

spurious correlation The appearance of causation produced by an intervening variable.

status A position in a social hierarchy that carries a particular set of expectations.

status inconsistency A situation in which there are serious differences between the different elements of an individual's socioeconomic status.

stereotyping Judging others based on preconceived generalizations about groups or categories of people.

stigma Erving Goffman's term for any physical or social attribute that devalues a person or group's identity, and which may exclude those who are devalued from normal social interaction.

structural functionalism A paradigm that begins with the assumption that society is a unified whole that functions because of the contributions of its separate structures.

structural mobility Changes in the social status of large numbers of people due to structural changes in society.

structural strain theory Robert King Merton's argument that, in an unequal society, the tension or strain between socially approved goals and an individual's ability to meet those goals through socially approved means will lead to deviance as individuals reject either the goals or the means or both.

structure A social institution that is relatively stable over time and that meets the needs of society by performing functions necessary to maintain social order and stability.

subculture A group within society that is differentiated by its distinctive values, norms, and lifestyle.

sublimation The process in which socially unacceptable desires are healthily channeled into socially acceptable expressions, according to Freud.

suburbanization Beginning after World War II, the shift of large segments of population away from the urban core and toward the edges of cities.

suffrage movement The movement organized around gaining voting rights for women.

superego According to Freud, one of three interrelated parts that make up the mind; the superego has two components (the conscience and the ego-ideal) and represents the internalized demands of society.

surface acting Trying to "act the part" expected in a specific situation, even if that part does not match your underlying mood.

survey A method based on questionnaires that are administered to a sample of respondents selected from a target population.

sustainable development Economic development that aims to reconcile global economic growth with environmental protection.

sweatshop A workplace where workers are subject to extreme exploitation, including below-standard wages, long hours, and poor working conditions that may pose health or safety hazards.

symbolic culture The ideas associated with a cultural group, including ways of thinking (beliefs, values, and assumptions) and ways of behaving (norms, interactions, and communication).

symbolic ethnicity An ethnic identity that is only relevant on specific occasions and does not significantly impact everyday life.

symbolic interactionism A paradigm that sees interaction and meaning as central to society and assumes that meanings are not inherent but are created through interaction.

synergy A mutually beneficial interaction between parts of an organization that allows them to create something greater than the sum of their individual outputs.

synthesis The new social system created out of the conflict between thesis and antithesis in a dialectical model.

taboo A norm ingrained so deeply that even thinking about violating it evokes strong feelings of disgust, horror, or revulsion.

target population The entire group about which a researcher would like to be able to generalize.

taste cultures Areas of culture that share similar aesthetics and standards of taste.

taste publics Groups of people who share similar artistic, literary, media, recreational, and intellectual interests.

technological determinism A theory of social change that assumes changes in technology drive changes in society, rather than vice versa.

technology Material artifacts and the knowledge and techniques required to use them.

telecommuting Working from home while staying connected to the office through communications technology.

tertiary deviation In labeling theory, the rejection or transformation of the stigma of a deviant identity.

textual poaching Henry Jenkins's term describing the ways that audience members manipulate an original cultural product to create a new one; a common way for fans to exert some control over the media they consume.

Thanatos In Freudian psychology, the drive or instinct toward aggression or destruction.

theories In sociology, abstract propositions that explain the social world and make predictions about future events.

thesis The existing social arrangements in a dialectical model.

third place Any informal public place where people come together regularly for conversation and camaraderie when not at work or at home.

Third Sector The part of the economy composed of nonprofit organizations; their workers are mission driven, rather than profit driven, and such organizations direct surplus funds to the causes they support. Also called the Independent Sector.

third wave The most recent period of feminist activity, focusing on issues of diversity and the variety of identities women can possess.

Thomas theorem Classic formulation of the way individuals define situations, whereby "if people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."

total institution An institution in which individuals are cut off from the rest of society so that their lives can be controlled and regulated for the purpose of systematically stripping away previous roles and identities in order to create new ones.

tracking The placement of students in educational "tracks," or programs of study (e.g., college prep, remedial), that determine the types of classes students take.

traditional authority Authority based in custom, birthright, or divine right.

tragedy of the commons A particular type of social dilemma in which many individuals' overexploitation of a public resource depletes or degrades that resource.

transgendered Term describing an individual whose sense of gender identity is at odds with her or his physical sex but who has not necessarily sought sex-reassignment surgery.

transsexuals Individuals who identify with the opposite sex and have surgery to alter their own sex so it fits their self-image.

treadmill of production Term describing the operation of modern economic systems that require constant growth, which causes increased exploitation of resources and environmental degradation.

triad A three-person social group.

two-step flow model Theory on media effects that suggests audiences get information through opinion leaders who influence their attitudes and beliefs, rather than through direct firsthand sources.

unchurched A term describing those who consider themselves spiritual but not religious and who often adopt aspects of various religious traditions.

underclass The poorest Americans who are chronically unemployed and may depend on public or private assistance; they constitute about 5 percent of the U.S. population.

Uniform Crime Report (UCR) An official measure of crime in the United States, produced by the FBI's official tabulation of every crime reported by over 17,000 law enforcement agencies.

union An association of workers who bargain collectively for increased wages and benefits and better working conditions.

upper class A largely self-sustaining group of the wealthiest people in a class system; in the United States they constitute about 1 percent of the population and possess most of the wealth of the country.

upper-middle class Mostly professionals and managers, who enjoy considerable financial stability; they constitute about 14 percent of the U.S. population.

urban Relating to cities; typically describes densely populated areas.

urban density Concentration of people in a city, measured by the total number of people per square mile.

urban legend Modern folklore; a story that is believed (incorrectly) to be true and is widely spread because it expresses concerns, fears, and anxieties about the social world.

urban renewal Efforts to rejuvenate decaying inner cities, including renovation, selective demolition, commercial development, and tax incentives.

urban sprawl A derogatory term applied to the expansion of urban or suburban boundaries, associated with irresponsible or poorly planned development.

urbanites People who live in cities.

urbanization Movement of increasing numbers of people from rural areas to cities.

uses and gratifications paradigm Approaches to understanding media effects that focus on individuals' psychological or social needs that consumption of various media fulfills.

utopia Literally "no place"; an ideal society in which all social ills have been overcome.

validity The accuracy of a question or measurement tool; the degree to which a researcher is measuring what he thinks he is measuring.

value-free sociology An ideal whereby researchers identify facts without allowing their own personal beliefs or biases to interfere.

values Ideas about what is desirable or contemptible and right or wrong in a particular group. They articulate the essence of everything that a cultural group cherishes and honors.

variables One of two or more phenomena that a researcher believes are related and hopes to prove are related through research.

verstehen "To understand"; Weber's term to describe good social research, which tries to understand the meanings that individual social actors attach to various actions and events.

vertical social mobility The movement between different class statuses, often called either upward mobility or downward mobility.

violent crime Crimes in which violence is either the objective or the means to an end, including murder, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery.

virtual community A community of people linked by their consumption of the same electronic media. Also called electronic community.

weighting Techniques for manipulating the sampling procedure so that the sample more closely resembles the larger population.

white flight Movement of upper- and middle-class whites who could afford to leave the cities for the suburbs, especially in the 1950s and 60s.

white-collar A description characterizing workers and skilled laborers in technical and lower-management jobs.

white-collar crime Crime committed by a high-status individual in the course of her or his occupation.

working class Mostly "blue-collar" or service industry workers who are less likely to have a college degree; they constitute about 30 percent of the U.S. population.

working poor Poorly educated workers who work full-time but remain below the poverty line; they constitute about 20 percent of the U.S. population.

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